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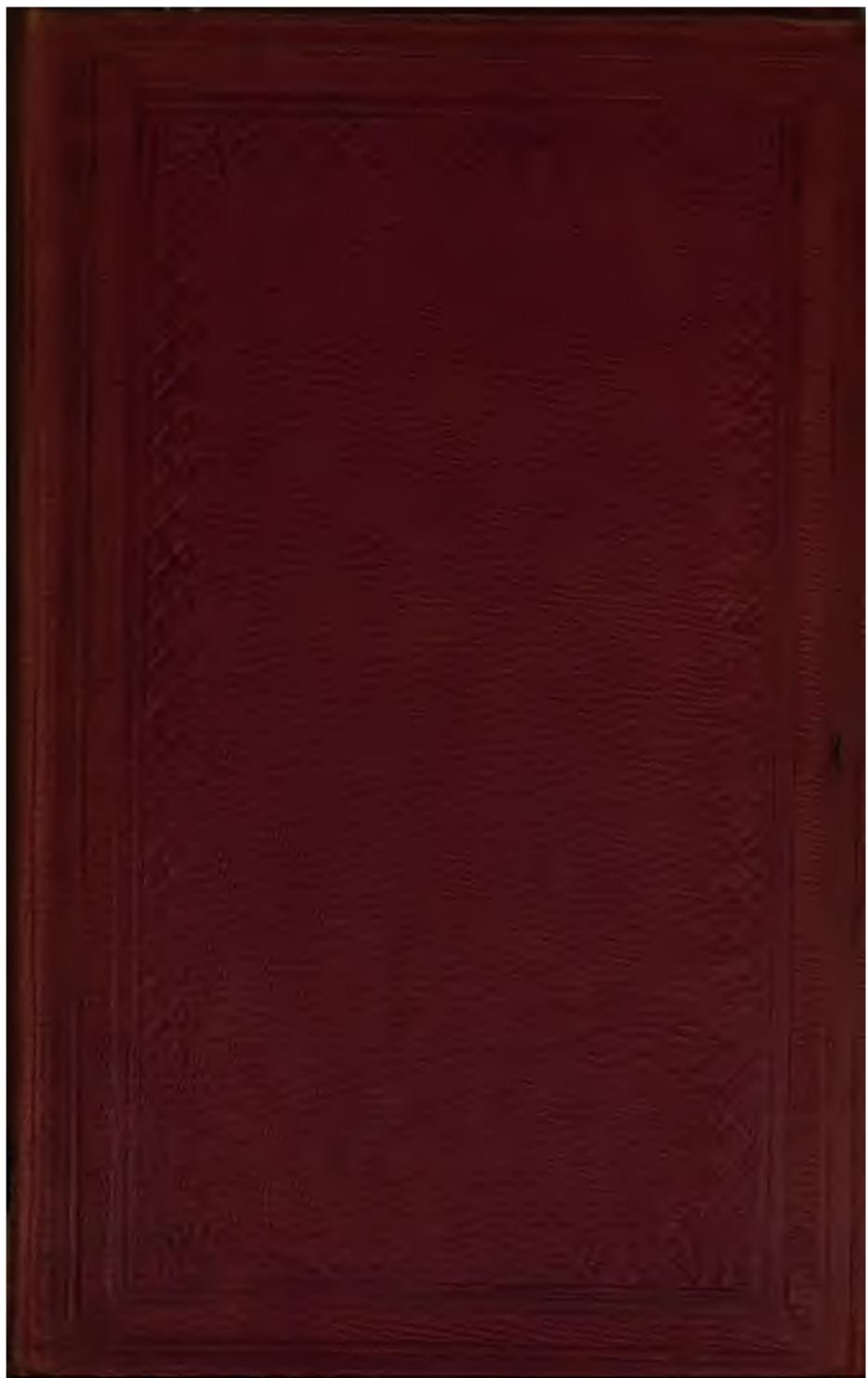
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“Everybody knows that fanaticism is religion caricatured; bears, indeed, about the same relation to it that a monkey bears to a man; yet, with many, contempt of fanaticism is received as a sure sign of hostility to religion.”—WHIPPLE’S LECTURES.

THE author, having for the last three years occupied much of her abundant leisure in a careful study of the best anti-Romanising authors, has thought it possible that the riddlings of all she has read on that subject might be useful to those who, being more unavoidably pre-occupied than herself, are nevertheless liable now, in whatever society they enter, to hear discussions connected with that faith which, depriving men of Holy Scripture, teaches Popish legends instead of Bible truths. Thus a Popish Priest, as he illuminates his altar with candles in the clearest daylight, so does he also prefer the uncertain glimmer of tradition to the glorious effulgence of Scripture,—obscuring the rays that come from Heaven, to display the tapers that he kindles himself.

On the death of Vincent De Paul, Madame De Sévigné, who knew him well, writes — “He was an agreeable man — only he cheated at cards!”* This individual is now a canonized

* Quarterly Review, No. clxviii. p. 482.

saint of the Roman Church ; and seeing thus how contemporary opinions differ widely, so that by some of his friends St. Vincent De Paul became worshipped as a saint, and by others became branded as a fraudulent gamester, the conclusion seems obvious, — how fallible is the judgment of the most infallible men in their verdict on others ; and that, far from trusting to their traditions, or to the statement of a man's most intimate friends, we must await the fiat of Him who cannot be deceived or mistaken, and who can alone divide the tares from the wheat, the goats from the sheep, the sinners from the saints.

So resolute were the Jews to preserve their own truthful Scriptures in perfect accuracy, that they counted the words, and even the letters, in each book ; therefore, no erasure or addition could be made to them. Christians may be grateful for the sanction this gives to Protestant belief in the perfect accuracy of the Old Testament ; while no sect of Christians, and no unbelievers, have ever been able to prove a flaw in the accuracy of the English Bible, though so many controversialists have eagerly sifted and cross-examined it for that purpose. The talented author of " Cautions for the Times " illustrates the uncertainty of tradition compared with Scripture by putting this familiar case : " A footman brings you a letter from a friend upon whose word you can perfectly rely, giving an account of something that has

happened to himself, and the exact account of which you are greatly concerned to know. While you are reading and answering the letter, the footman goes into the kitchen, and there gives your cook an account of the same thing, which, he says, he heard the upper servants at home talking over, as related to them by the valet, who said he had it from your friend's son's own lips. The cook retails the story to your groom, and he, in turn, tells you. Would you judge of that story by the letter?"

The Bible shews how rapidly tradition becomes untruthful from that passage in St. John, where Jesus Christ says to Peter, in answer to his question what John should do, ^{xxi. 22.} "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Then went this saying abroad among the brethren" (oral tradition), "that that disciple should not die." Christ also says, "Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your traditions."

Without the Bible men would be mere weeds in the garden of life, as within its four corners all infallible truth is contained, — a Protestant's religion is wholly based on the Bible. He works by the Bible, finds his warrant in the Bible, and has his model in the Bible, but a Romanist's religion is solely based on the Pope. The Protestant rule of faith is the Bible, and the Bible

alone; but the Romish rule is the priesthood, and the priesthood alone. Protestants, in short, acknowledge no infallibility but in the Bible; and most truly did a good old Church of England clergyman say respecting Papists being forbidden to examine Scripture, "If God's book were in the hands of men, popery could not remain in their hearts."

Pius IX., in his recent circular letter, anathematises "the new art of book-making;" and truly a free press must be a very inconvenient companion to Romanism, the very existence of which depends on the generality of Papists being kept ignorant of truth, and debarred from reading Scripture in their own language, so as thus to understand its real meaning. The agitation of thought is the beginning of knowledge; therefore, Protestants endeavour fairly and frankly to lay open the word of God to every man without exception, while they enjoin, inculcate, and even entreat its careful examination. But the great object of Romanism is, that none but the priests, being parties concerned in most important concealments, may have an opportunity, by reading Scripture in their own tongue, to find out how the obvious meaning is misrepresented. Fortunately, in free and happy England the Bible has been wide open during so many Protestant years, that the light of revelation is too strong for popery, which thrives best in mystery and darkness; therefore,

it is to be hoped that the majority of British Bibles may long remain without a lock over their sacred contents, or over those understandings that seek the teaching of God's own Spirit in reading them.

How solemn must be the last farewell of a perverted Protestant to her Bible! She has carried it in her heart and in her hand from earliest childhood, as a book illuminated with Divine truth; but now that sacred candle of the Lord is to be for ever hid under a bushel. She has enlisted herself among those Papists with whom it is a forbidden book, who have put thousands to death for reading it, who give her in exchange "The Glories of Mary," by Alphonso Liguori; and who insultingly executed the brave old Scottish martyrs with a Bible strung round their necks, in punishment for the crime they had committed in possessing one.

By the breath of legendary tradition, Romanists dim the clearness of Scriptural truth, and would, by hanging a mill-stone of imaginary stories to the Holy Bible, sink it if possible into oblivion. Those who obey the Council of Trent in placing tradition, "the unwritten word," on a level with Scripture, place themselves on an inclined plane with nothing to stop them short of Romanism or infidelity. It is not the authority of tradition that can be raised by such an extensive belief, but the authority of Scripture must be immeasur-

ably lowered in the estimation of those who think themselves bound to credit all or nothing. To a thinking convert, the Popish legends and visions become, on mature examination, so utterly incredible, that too often all is thrown over-board together, and the excitement of a feverish fancy becomes calamitously followed by a collapse into atheism. Men have often said that there never existed a nation of infidels; but it is also well-known that there is one city full of them now, and that city is Rome. There the Pope places on his shoe the visible sign of man's redemption; but he tramples under foot all its happiest fruits; seeing which, the more deeply any man reverences the religion of Christ, the more must he abhor that spurious imitation of it, the religion of Mary.

The works of Voltaire, Volney, and Hume are not so contraband at Rome as the Bible; and in the list of prohibited books within the Pope's dominions may be found every Protestant work on religion worth reading, from the most learned classical authors, down to the unobtrusive little "Dairyman's Daughter:" but a certain very influential Priest made an unintended admission lately, when, in publicly forbidding the use of Scripture, he hastily added, "The moment a man searches the Bible for any doctrine he becomes a Protestant." When Paul preached to the Bereans, even though he was an inspired Apostle, they are commended because they "searched the Scrip-

tures daily to see whether these things were so ; " and it is a pleasing proof of English liberty in testing doctrine by Scripture, that when a portion of the Holy Bible is quoted by any Protestant clergyman, more than a hundred Bibles are searched on the spot to ascertain that the text is rigidly adhered to. The audible flutter of so many pages hastily turned over in church, tells of truth and faithfulness in those who preach and in those who hear.

There is a very awful curse promulgated in the book of Revelations against those who add to or take from the Word of God ; but the sin must be yet greater of those who take away the Word of God altogether, substituting in its place many volumes of legendary tales, and thus giving men the stones of tradition for the bread of Holy Scripture. The words of our Divine Saviour sound very like promulgating Protestant liberty for every mortal to search the Scriptures, when He says to the Sadduces, " Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures." This proves that even the Sadduces were intended to read them ; and when our Lord repelled Satan himself, it was by quoting what is written in Scripture. He also describes Abraham blaming the rich man's brethren — " if they hear not Moses and the prophets :" and our Lord rebukes the Pharisees for " not knowing the Scriptures." In Revelations, too, Matt. xxii. 29. St. John says of the most mysterious

book in Scripture, "Blessed is he that readeth and they that hear the words of this prophecy." It is singular that the Romanists have never published any authorised explanation of a single book in the Bible, because, as is proved in Edgar's Variations of Popery, they say, like the builders of Babel, "Behold, we are one," yet cannot agree. Edgar historically demonstrates, that instead of unity in the Romish Church, there are numerous sects of Papists fiercer in their hostility, and in their stronger denunciations against each other, than any sects in the Protestant faith, which is the more surprising, as in the Popish Church only one person is allowed to think for all. They are divided about free will and predestination, whether their boasted infallibility lies in the Pope, or in the Council, or in both together. The Dominicans differ from the Franciscans on an important point respecting the Virgin Mary. The bitter feuds of the Jansenists and Jesuits are notorious in history; and many rival Popes have existed at once, each infallibly condemning the other as a fallible impostor. When Peter said "no prophecy" is of private intrepretation, he did not say so of doctrines; and St. Chrysostom remarks, in most Protestant language, "He that would know which is the true Church of Christ, whence may he know it in so great confusion, but only by the Scripture? Now the working of miracles is altogether ceased;

yea, they are rather found to be feignedly wrought of them which are but false Christians. Whence then shall we know it, but only by the Scriptures?"

Sir Henry Wotton made an excellent answer, when asked by a Romanist the usual question, "Where was your religion before the time of Luther?" and he replied, "Where your religion never was—in the Bible." It would seem better policy in Popish priests not so obviously to withhold God's written message from man, as it appears like Ahab's feeling against Micaiah, the prophet of God, "I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil."

Leo XII., in 1824, renewed the Papal anathema against the Holy Scriptures, "those poisoned pastures," and the present Pope has strictly prohibited Bible reading; yet any Christian who professes to guide his life by the rule of God's word, without ever reading it, acts as unaccountably as if he put a sun-dial in the shade, and professed to measure his time according to its dictates.

Men seem no more intended to read the Bible by proxy, than to eat or to drink by proxy. It would ill requite the kindness of any deceased benefactor, for a legatee to relinquish the privilege of reading the events recorded for his special instruction of a life devoted to his benefit, and of studying the last injunctions left him on a death-

bed, even though an obliging friend might offer to examine the purport of what had been said, and to report the conditions on which an important legacy was bequeathed for the survivor's advantage. Protestants prefer examining for themselves, "lest the light that is in them be darkness," and do not incline to treat their Bible as the people of Thibet treat the Grand Llama, which is locked up by the priests, that no ordinary votaries may have access to the object of their veneration.

In exacting by the generality of Christians a total divorce from Scripture in their own language, the Roman decretal claims for the Pope an infallible right of deciding in opposition to the Bible, of superseding law, being himself above all law, and of setting aside the Gospel by determining its meaning as seemeth him good. There can be no such despotic interpreter necessary, however, to explain all that is essential to salvation, for truly, as St. Chrysostom says, "Who is there to whom all is not manifest which is written in the Gospel? Who that shall hear 'Blessed are the meek, blessed are the merciful, blessed are the pure in heart,' would require a teacher to learn any of these things which are here spoken? As also the signs, Chrys. Hom. 3. miracles, histories, are they not known and manifest to every man?"

Here we find this primitive Father a *Protestant!* but as Erasmus observes in his epistle to the Bishop and Cardinal of Mentz, “ It is plainly found that many things in Luther’s books are condemned for heretical, which in the books of Bernard and Austin are read for holy and orthodox.” In fact, the most important truths of the Bible are as distinct to the eye of an earnest Christian as the flowers that shine through a solid ball of crystal.

The universal heart of human nature is weighed down by the solemn consciousness that all, without exception, are helpless sinners, deservedly under the wrath of an offended God. It is singular that every religion, Pagan, Hindoo, or Mahometan, the worshippers of Moloch, or the worshippers of the Sun, are every one seeking, by austerities, to propitiate an angry Deity ; but the Christian alone is taught that his only self-inflicted suffering should be the avoiding those sins which brought pain and death into the world, but not to attempt atoning for that which is already atoned for by his one only Mediator. The Holy Bible stands as a rock, high and conspicuous in the boundless ocean of existence, and he who obtains a firm footing there, is safe for all eternity. Let him not seek elsewhere any untried floating plank in the stormy passage of life ; but, tossed as he may be by fears, sorrows,

doubts, and perplexities, still, if his soul be but anchored on the written promises of God, he shall “never be confounded.” In Scripture man finds all necessary to be known respecting the enigma of his own existence, and the divinely appointed remedy for his ruined state. There he reads that many shall be rejected as utter strangers, who have no better plea for mercy than that they have done mighty works in the name of our Lord, unless they have lived “as becometh saints.” The mere titles Christian, Orthodox, Catholic, or Churchman, will no more avail those who, like Jews and Pagans, blindly yield to authority rather than exercise private judgment,—than the claim of the Jews when they pleaded, “Are we not Abraham’s children?”

The Papal remedy for sin is to buy an absolution, the cost of which not being known in Protestant England, where Christians hope to be pardoned “without money and without price,” the following list is copied from a folio published at Paris in 1520. “For a layman murdering a layman, 7s. 6d. For him that killeth his father, mother, or wife, 10s. 6d. For him that has committed perjury, 9s.” These would be considered very reasonable terms in Bow-street! Such bargains, however, are not obsolete even now, as many travellers have returned from Rome lately bringing a purchased absolution sold by Pius IX.

himself, for all their sins and for the sins of all those friends whose names they chose to insert in a blank left for the purpose, thus making each purchaser his own Pope. The author had a kind offer that her name should be inserted in one such extensive absolution which she saw some years ago, bought by the late Sir Adam Fergusson. Dr. Thomas Secker mentions, that in his time similar indulgences were sold to any number of strangers, for any number of crimes, price ten shillings ! Surely this is a very clumsy cheat, which to educated Englishmen indicates a strange contempt for the human understanding !

When the jailor at Philippi came to the Apostles, asking, "What must I do to be saved?" these disciples in no degree referred the enquirer to their own authority,—they did not say, "Come to us as priests, and confess,"—they did not sell him an indulgence nor produce any old bones to be worshipped, nor desire him to pray at random to all the Saints, nor to trust in the Virgin Mary, but they simply replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." The object of every false superstition always is to interpose a barrier between the sinner and that Saviour, who is "waiting to be gracious," and who says, "Before you call I will answer, and while you are yet speaking I will hear." No language could be plainer than that of Christ on that occasion, when "the common people heard

him gladly ; ” but Cardinal Buonaventura, “ the seraphic Doctor,” now worshipped as a saint, altered our Lord’s command “ Come unto me,” and made it “ Come unto Mary.” When a father calls his child to himself, does he then mean that it shall go to another ! No ! the whole plan of mercy for man rests on his looking, not at the Church, nor to the Priests, nor to the Saints, nor to his own merits, nor to his own penitence, nor to a purchased indulgence, but with grateful, obedient confidence immediately to a willing and always gracious Mediator. Let every Christian feel, towards his Divine Redeemer, as Diogenes did when Alexander intercepted the light of the sun, only impatient for the obstacle to be removed.

A Protestant Christian finds, even in the greatest miracles recorded by the Bible, nothing contrary to the evidence of his senses, but all harmonious and distinct. When Christ at the marriage in Cana turned the water into wine, that miracle was visible to every spectator’s eye and taste. As Dryden so beautifully expresses it, “ The conscious water saw its Lord and blushed.” In a Popish Church, on the contrary, when the Priest is supposed to turn bread into flesh, he must work a double miracle ; first, that it shall be really transformed ; and secondly, that the transformation shall not be visible. Our Lord, in adopting figurative Eastern phraseology, said

“This is my body,” though he was then present in his own entire unbroken body. He likewise says elsewhere, “I am the door,” and also “The seven candlesticks are seven churches;” but who takes these expressions literally! Duns Scotus, the professor of Divinity at Oxford in 1301, says as clearly as the Professor of Divinity at Oxford could do now, that “previous to the Council of Lateran, transubstantiation was not an article of faith.”

The doctrine of Infallibility, like an iron hoop, rivets all the eccentricities of Romish doctrine together; and can anything be conceived more calculated to crush the intellectual vigour of all, than this assumption by one only? Dr. Wylie says in his work on the Papacy, “As an infallible Church, Rome presents her votaries with a system of dogmas, not a few of which are opposed to reason, and some of them even to the senses. Those dogmas are not to be investigated; the person must not attempt to reconcile them to reason, or to the evidence of his senses; he must not even attempt to understand them, but they are simply to be believed. If he demand grounds for this belief, he is told that he is committing mortal sin and perilling his salvation. Here is all action of the mind interdicted under the highest sanctions. The person is taught that he cannot commit a greater crime than to think; that he cannot more

grievously offend against his Creator than by using the powers his Creator has endowed him with. Thus, while the first effect of Christianity is to quicken the intellect, the first effect of Romanism is to strike it with torpor. She inexorably demands of all her votaries that they denude themselves of their understandings and their senses, and prostrate them beneath the wheels of this Juggernaut of hers. While the Protestant is employed in investigating the grounds of his creed, in tracing the relations of its various truths, and in following out their consequences, the mind of the Romanist is all the while lying dormant. As the bandaged limb loses in time the power of motion, so faculties not used become at length incapable of use. A timid disposition, an inert habit, is produced, which is not confined to religion, but extends to every subject with which the person has to do. His reason is shut up in a cave, and Infallibility rolls a great stone to the cave's mouth."

In 1829 the Pope, for the first time, reversed the Papal denunciations against those who believe that the world moves round the sun and its own axis, according to the discovery of Galileo some centuries before, whose name and whose assertions had been till then branded by infallible authority as heretical. There are pictures exhibited by the Papists as having been painted by St. Luke,

which the Pope by a stretch of infallibility warrants perfectly genuine, but nevertheless they are in a style of art so palpably more modern than the period alleged, that Lanzi protests their origin "can only be credited among the vulgar." Either the Pope's infallibility or the connoisseur's is strangely at fault. A favourite subject for the pencil of Murillo and other Popish painters, is "the marriage of St. Catherine," of whom there is no proof that she ever existed; but the Pope, who forbids the clergy to marry, nevertheless promulgates, on the credit of his infallibility, that legend in respect to her, which the pen of a Protestant cannot write.

The Romish Church calls herself the mother of all Churches; but she proves herself a very arbitrary step-mother while claiming a position of priority which equally belongs to the Church at Jerusalem, the Greek Church, or any of the seven Churches of Asia. The religion taught now by Romanists cannot be called Christianity, but is Mariolatry, a perfectly different faith, and those who have been accustomed all their lives to worship a Holy Trinity in Unity, cannot receive the unaccountable assertion that there is a Queen of Heaven. In Archbishop Reilly's catechism, Mary is called "Holy Mother of God,—Refuge of sinners,—Comfortress of the afflicted,—Queen of Angels, and Mother of our Creator!" Alphonso

Liguori, the saint canonized in 1839 by Cardinal Wiseman, addresses his readers as "Children of Mary," and begins his introduction thus: "My dear reader and brother in Mary." St. Bernardine likewise says, "As many as obey God, so many obey the glorious Virgin; everything in heaven and on earth which is subject to God is also under the empire of His most Holy Mother." If that be not idolatry, there never was idolatry on the earth; and who can wonder that the Papists, seeing how powerfully the Bible would testify against such offenders, exclude that infallible witness from appearing in court! The Sultan in 1824 promulgated a firman, forbidding on pain of death any one reading the Bible; and not long since the newspapers recorded that a student had been expelled from Maynooth College for the same crime. This is a curious coincidence of conduct.

Worshipping the Virgin was never heard of till five hundred years after her death, when it was first mentioned by P. Tullio; and subsequently the name of Mary became a favourite war-cry among the gallant and chivalrous crusaders. Mary's own words are, "My spirit hath rejoiced in God *my Saviour*." According to St. Hilary, one of the earliest Popish writers, the Virgin was, like the saints, martyrs, and prophets of the Church, to pass through purgatory; and the sacred writers after our Lord's crucifixion preserve a total and perfectly in-

different silence respecting her. It is evident from the last verse of the 1st chapter of Matthew, that Mary lived afterwards with her husband Joseph as his wife; and it is remarkable that never once, after his resurrection, does Christ call himself “The son of man!” Our Divine Saviour, in referring especially to Mary, when she was announced as his mother, answered that “thenceforth no one should know him after the flesh;” and it seems impossible for language to speak more plainly than Jesus did when a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice to say how blessed His mother was, and He replied, “*Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.*” When John took Mary home as his adopted mother, no doubt multitudes would have besieged his door to obtain her intercession, had she been supposed to have any miraculous power; but no action of her subsequent life claimed any authority, nor are the time and circumstances of her death of sufficient consequence to be recorded.

On the Popish beads and in the rosary there are ten “Hail Marys” for one Lord’s Prayer, yet we never hear, in Scripture or in history, that during her life a single human being ever prayed to the Virgin. Had Mary seen such adoration paid to her, would she not have exclaimed like Paul, “Sirs! why do ye these things? We

are of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made Heaven and earth." When Cornelius attempted to worship Peter, how distinctly the Apostle forbad him "stand up, I myself also am a man." What Pope would say so now to his kneeling attendants; but "let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels." Col. ii. 18. When John threw himself at the feet of an angel, the heavenly visitor reproved him, saying, "See thou do it not, I am thy fellow-servant; worship God."

There is at Rome, on the 15th of August, an annual festival in memory of a scene that never took place, "The Assumption of the Virgin:" anno 36, when her age must have been about seventy, though she is represented always young and beautiful. The legend is, that as the apostles were carrying Mary to the grave, the High Priest of the Jews, on attempting to touch her coffin, found both his arms fall off by the elbows. Peter told him to profess Christianity and kiss the coffin, which he did, and his arms were immediately fastened on again. Mary's body was then buried, but, after three days, angels came and carried her human body up to Heaven. "But," says the Popish Breviary, a book of which every Priest is bound to read a daily portion, "Who

is sufficient to conceive, how glorious on this day was the progress of the Queen of the world ! with what transport of devout affection the whole multitude of the heavenly hosts went forth to meet her ! with what hymns she was conducted to the throne of glory ! with how placid, how serene an aspect ! with what Divine embraces she was received by her Son, and exalted above every creature !” Protestants, tempted sometimes by the beauty of engravings which represent these fabulous traditions, are induced to adorn their rooms with such representations, which accustom young people to associate the gratification of their most refined tastes with superstitious tales. Going merely to hear music at the convents and Popish churches often ends in going there to worship ; while the excitement of listening to the *Stabat Mater* and such beautiful music in honour of Mary, is not only profane but dangerous.

Dr. Ware, in a recent volume, says, “ The great extent to which the love of the Virgin is carried, and to which it supplants the worship of Christ and God, one could not believe without witnessing. The love of the Virgin amounts to a passion. They pour out their sorrows and love into her sympathizing human heart, and as surely expect relief and pardon by her intercession as if they poured them out at the throne of God ! Bedizened with all the fine clothing and tinsel they can possibly

load her with, there mingles with this worship too much of a purely human feeling. On one occasion of special service, they who came up to the image one after another to do her homage — dressed rather more splendidly than common, holding the child on her knee — seemed incapable of parting with it: they would approach her, kneel, and, after a silent prayer, rise, and kiss her silver foot, then lay their cheek upon it, first on one side, then on the other, as if hardly able to tear themselves away from embracing it, so as to give place to another of the crowd, who would then advance and go through the same demonstrations. On the mother's knee sat all the while the young Christ — but wholly unnoticed, quite neglected; all was forgotten for the love and worship of the beautiful mother."

It must be a strange sensation to an educated Protestant, the first time he kneels down before a wooden image! But let wavering young people remember, that to such idolatry the Popish Church, once embraced, will at last force them onwards, and, forgetting all minor differences among Protestants, unite in one fervent desire to avoid idolatry, and in one strong resolution rather to die than not worship the Trinity in Unity alone and undivided. When Bishop Hooper stood at the stake, a table was placed before him with his pardon on it, signed and ready if he would

only relinquish Bible truths ; but he expired a willing martyr : and many a Protestant has welcomed death in the spirit of the Vendean, whose war-cry was, “ *Notre Dieu est mort pour nous, mourrons pour lui.* ”

A lady who had been for some time lately under the clandestine tuition of a Popish Bishop, declared that her chief difficulty in joining the Romish communion arose from the impossibility she felt in reconciling her mind or conscience to the worshipping of a woman in Heaven. “ Then,” replied the Bishop, “ that need not delay your profession, for it will come in time.” Accordingly it did come in a much shorter time than the convert had reckoned on, for no sooner had she sworn to believe whatever doctrine the Church infallibly taught, than she found that this oath included Mariolatry, image-worship, and every other unchristian superstition of Romanism.

The custom of keeping relics arose among Pagans long after the Bible was completed ; and all must be aware, from reading tomb-stones, funeral sermons, and biographies, how impossible it is to know for certain who, during their lives, were or were not saints on earth, many being painted in rainbow colours borrowed solely from the bright imagination of the writer, and others most unjustly censured, or more fortunate in being forgotten,

The Popish writers themselves acknowledge that, after the lapse of eighteen centuries, it is impossible to dispute that many of the bones recently consecrated must be spurious, and that many, so far from belonging to saints, did not probably belong to Christians, or even to human beings. Pope Alexander III. discovered that a drunkard had been worshipped as a saint, so he publicly corrected the blunder; and, in short, such relics are as apocryphal as the relic lately exhibited of “Oliver Cromwell’s skull when he was a boy.”

No doubt the popularity of Romanism proceeds, in some degree, from its being merely an exaggeration of human nature; for, as Archbishop Whately points out, all men have a natural tendency to Papal weaknesses. Who does not, with harmless affection, keep as a relic of his deceased friends, a lock of hair, an old letter, or perhaps even an old glove, though not certainly any morsels of his bones, teeth, or skin,—who does not with pardonable partiality describe the departed members of his own family as having been so perfectly faultless, that it was a condescension in them to have lived some years in a world so unworthy of their merits,—who does not endeavour in letters or biographies to represent that his lamented relative deserved to be almost translated into glory,—who does not gaze at the portrait of those he has loved and lost, till it seems almost to live again,—in

how many schools do the children pay a fine for misconduct as if purchasing an absolution : in what nursery are children not told hobgoblin stories to frighten them by a pious fraud into being good : and who has not some favourite preacher, wiser, better, and holier than all others, to whom he listens with profound veneration, and whom he believes to be almost infallible ?

If the Apostle Peter could look back from that happier world to which, through the merits of his Divine Master, and not his own, he is gone, how impossible it would be for him now to recognize his own representative in a single point of similarity. After the Apostle had replied to our Lord : "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," and our Saviour had said upon that rock He would build His Church, — upon the doctrine, not the disciple, — Peter still was evidently not infallible. That Apostle said subsequently, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee ;" but not having been really infallible in saying so ; the erring Apostle "went out and wept bitterly." Paul spoke like a Protestant, when, long after our Lord's decease, he "withstood Peter to the face, because he was to be blamed ;" and when a dispute arose among the disciples who should be greatest, our Divine Saviour did not name Peter. It is remarkable that when Papists have leave to read the circular letters of all Popes,

they are not allowed St. Peter's Epistles, whom they consider the first Pope. In fact, the Apostle is not sufficiently Popish, — “*le roi n'est pas assez royaliste.*” In Peter's last Epistle, written in the near prospect of death, he says not a syllable about the duty of all successive Christians to submit to his successors; but refers his followers back for direction to the prophets and apostles, and to Paul's Epistles. In Revelations, too, Our Lord speaks of the seven churches as each independent of any earthly infallibility. The Greek church is universally acknowledged to be as old as that of Rome; and though the sacred writers speak of “one Lord, one faith, and one baptism,” they never add “one Pope, one council, and one form of government.”*

Paul wrote six of his Epistles from Rome during his first imprisonment, and one during his second, twenty-four years after Our Lord's ascension; yet he never once mentions St. Peter being at Rome, though, had that Apostle been head of the church there, could Paul have said “all men forsook me?” In his last Epistle (2d Timothy), written just before his death, Paul says, “Only Luke is with me.” A modern Papist, much perplexed for an answer when asked in argument lately where Peter was when all men at Rome

* Cautions for the Times.

had forsaken Paul, replied, “I suppose he had gone to the country !”

There is in fact no positive proof that Peter ever was at Rome, therefore the chain of Popish succession wants the first link. In a consultation held by the Apostles and Elders, long after Our Lord’s death, St. James, Bishop of Jerusalem, takes the lead, and pronounces what his sentence is, in a tone of authority ^{Acts, xv. 19.} which, had it been used by Peter, would have been supposed, among the Papists, to settle the matter for ever. When Our Lord said, “I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven,” He plainly meant the church on earth, they being then the usual emblem of authority. Peter merely received power to admit proper persons into the church, and to exclude improper persons from it, — a power equally given to all the other Apostles; therefore Peter assumes no supremacy when he begins his own epistle by saying, “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ.” St. Augustine counts over about eighty heresies existing in the early Church; and Jeremy Taylor remarks that “the matter of the Pope’s infallibility is so ridiculous and improbable, that the Papists themselves do not believe it.”

A Protestant clergyman diligently acquaints himself with every scriptural argument against all who differ from him, while he studiously pre-

pare to rectify the errors of Unitarians, Baptists, Greeks, or Romans, — but the Popish priest has a short and easy method with Protestants. He merely announces in an authoritative tone the infallibility of his own church and of his own teaching, while he forbids his people to read any book not of his opinions, especially the Bible, with which he is most of all at variance. In a court of justice, parties interested in any case are not allowed to pronounce judgment. Any church might assume the same peremptory language (the Mormons do in very positive terms), and, like the Chinese empire, promulgate a law that they must be considered perfect ; but what infallible authority has proved the Romish priest infallible, except his own assertion : yet having to his own satisfaction declared that point, he may build upon it any wood, hay, and stubble that the wildest tradition can dictate.

The Chinese quite outshine all Romanists in the splendour of their religious ritual ; and if mere unity of opinion held by numbers be a sanction for Popery, the Chinese Mahometans and Hindoos are each more numerous, and greatly more united. Bishop Warburton says, “ The gods, temples, and ceremonies of Pagan times were adapted by Papists to Christianity with the souls of men. The bronze statue of Jupiter became St. Peter, and Juno has transmitted her peacock feathers to the

state insignia of the Pope." Jupiter's bronze statue has the great toe literally worn away by the pilgrims daily kissing it, in memory of St. Peter ; and spectators may see every morning an indiscriminate crowd of beggars, thieves, monks, and ladies, who all reverentially wipe what remains of Jupiter's toe, the ladies enthusiastically using their embroidered pocket-handkerchiefs before taking their turn with graceful humility to salute this transformed deity. Thus the Papists have literally done like the people of Lystra, who "called Barnabas Jupiter, and Paul Mercurius!" The late Sir William Drummond was much censured for comparing Christianity to Heathenism, but how much more to blame are those who make it so.

The inscription over the Roman Pantheon is as follows:—"Impiously dedicated of old by Agrippa to Jove and all the gods, now piously consecrated by Pope Boniface IV. to the blessed Virgin and all the saints!" Nothing can be more gorgeous than the statue of Juno at Rome, now adorned to represent the Virgin. Mary, who on earth led a life of the most perfect simplicity in dress and habits, is now represented in diamonds that no empress could match, and her votaries have committed an odd anachronism by putting upon their idol a pair of splendid ear-rings.

When the Italian banditti commit their darkest

crimes, they nevertheless wear a representation of the Virgin suspended from the throat, which is one evidence among thousands how superstition sanctions immorality ; and the Spanish peasantry have so little real respect for their idols, that when, contrary to their prayers, any disasters occur, they revile these lifeless figures in the grossest language, and habitually make jests upon them. At Lisbon once, a miraculous image not having bowed its head at a time when the priest expected, he spoke to it very authoritatively again, before a large crowd assembled rapturously to witness the supernatural movement, when a small boy put his head out from beneath the drapery, saying, “ It is not my fault, sir, for the string is broken.”

The celebrated image of the Virgin Mary at Saragossa, supposed to perform miracles, is a little black doll, dressed in scarlet satin and gold ; but there are rival dolls in every city of Spain, where the most angry jealousy rages fiercely between the inhabitants respecting the superiority of their favourite image. It is a sign of the times now in the English streets, to observe the image boys carrying little stucco crucifixes, and St. Josephs, to be sold for about ninepence each.

If the Virgin Mary being called in Scripture “ blessed among women ” be a sufficient warrant for giving her divine worship, it should be as much transferred to Leah, who said, “ Happy am

I, for the daughters will call me blessed ;" and when Jael killed Sisera, Deborah in Judges, v. 24. her inspired song says, "Blessed ABOVE women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be ; blessed shall she be ABOVE women." Our Divine Saviour in his last hour of suffering guarded against any mistake in respect to the reverence due to Mary by calling her, not "Mother," but "Woman ;" and as a mere woman, much to be respected, though unable even to succour herself, he refers her to the friendly care of John. In Alphonso Liguori's work, "The Glories of Mary," a vision is mentioned, of "two ladders, one red, at the summit of which stood Jesus Christ ; the other white, at the top of which presided Mary. The saint who saw this observed, that many who endeavoured to ascend the first ladder, after mounting a few steps, fell down ; and on trying again, were equally unsuccessful, so that they never attained the summit ; but a voice having told them to make a trial of the white ladder, they soon gained the top, the blessed Virgin having held forth her hands to help him." How obvious are the inferences meant to be drawn from this worse than foolish legend ! But Romanism teaches that Mary is more merciful, and more willing to welcome sinners, than that Divine Saviour of whom it is said, "we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our

infirmitiess; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

Pius IX. wrote lately from Gaeta in a circular letter thus: — "The Virgin Mary is placed between Christ and the Church, because it is God's will that she should receive all through Mary." Thus the object of a false creed always is, to place something between the people and that Divine Saviour, who came from Heaven and lived among men to prove His desire that we should come with perfect confidence to Himself. Feeble and sinful mortals could not have survived the glorious vision of God, therefore our Saviour assumed a human form, with every innocent feeling of man's nature, that he might adapt Himself to our necessities. The Romanists, not satisfied with the glorious simplicity of this plan for our redemption, still find their thoughts so dazzled by contemplating the majestic dignity of our Redeemer, that they have recourse to the angels. These being still too bright, they canonize mortals, to whom they pray; but again Romanists drop the scale much lower by having recourse to images of these saints; and at last, to relieve the imagination from any oppression of superiority, the Papists take a living mortal man, their daily companion, of a mortal, sinful nature like their own, and having ordained him to be a priest, they make him their confessor, and transfer to him that office of intercession

which Christ came on earth to assume exclusively Himself. Thus, like Adam after his fall, they “hide themselves from God.”

Ignatius Loyola, in his last moments, said that his followers must believe black to be white, if told to do so ; and a Romanist giving up the independent dignity of man, as God created him, free, intelligent, and personally responsible, is told he can have no salvation but by doing and believing whatever he is told by his infallible Pope or priest to do and to believe. If a Protestant’s life depended on believing what is contrary to the evidence of his senses, he could not manage to do so ; but the salvation of a Papist is forfeited if he cannot believe black is white when told to do so. Is there rest in such a Church ? The Protestant looks at a picture, and is told that it winks, or that it bleeds ; but even if perfectly willing to believe the story he cannot do so, because he sees the eyes immovably steady ; but the Papist must not only say so without perceiving it, but must actually believe so, or he is lost. When Petruchio made Katherine take the sun for the moon, he could only oblige her to agree with him verbally, but her own private opinion on the subject was probably free, which is not the privilege of a Romanist.

“ The responsibility of forming some judgment is one which, however unfit we may deem ourselves to bear it, we cannot possibly get rid of,

in any matter about which we really feel an anxious care. It is laid upon us by God, and we cannot shake it off. Before a man can rationally *judge*, that he should submit his judgment in other things to the Church of Rome, he must have judged, 1st. That there is a God. 2nd. That Christianity comes from God. 3rd. That Christ has promised to give an infallible authority in the Church. 4th. That such authority resides in Rome. Now, to say that men who are competent to form sound judgments upon these points, are quite incompetent to form sound judgments about any other matters in religion, is very like saying, that men may have sound judgments of their own *before* they enter the Church of Rome, but that they *lose* all sound judgment entirely from the moment they enter it.”*

It is the characteristic of all false religions to have inner mysteries only revealed to the initiated; but it is the dignified peculiarity of honest, open-hearted Protestantism to have no secrets. The humblest disciple may compare what he is taught with the same divinely inspired volume before him, from which the most learned teacher draws his knowledge. There, the most simple-hearted reader finds St. Paul assuring Timothy, that the Holy Scriptures are “able to make him wise unto salvation.”

* Cautions for the Times, No. 2.

A Protestant clergyman lives, as his divine Master did, in the open face of day. Every action he performs, and every word he says, is liable to the night and day scrutiny—often a very severe one!—of his friends, his relatives, his wife, his children, his servants, his neighbours, and his whole congregation; therefore, living in such a house of glass, his every action must be up to the mark of high Christian principle. He must shun the very appearance of evil, and give a constant example of those virtues he lives to inculcate. From the highest dignitary of the Protestant Church to the poorest curate, the whole of his professional influence would vanish, were he convicted of a single known vice. As our divine Saviour went about doing good, and engaging in familiar conversation with His twelve inseparable friends and witnesses, so do His ministers now live, surrounded by those who hear all their sentiments and see all their actions. The Popish priest, on the contrary, leads a hole-and-corner life, of which society in general can take no cognisance; and what his real temper, opinions, and habits are, no one can tell. The curtain over monastic life is impenetrable.

In all denominations of Protestant Christianity, new converts are received without any oaths of adherence, because the continuance of individuals is expected naturally to be the result of a perse

vering conviction that their adopted belief is exactly according to the scriptural revelations of God. Thus, if a Unitarian, a Baptist, or a Quaker, become a member of the English Church, he deliberately converses with the clergyman of his parish, who searchingly ascertains that his views are clearly sound, and then receives him to the Holy Communion upon the authority of that text, “Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and *drink of that cup.*” A Romanist, on the contrary, turns the key upon his converts by exacting secret oaths, which it would afterwards be deemed ignominious to break.

Bishop Hall, in his “Censure of Travel,” describes the frauds used by Popish priests on the Continent to entrap Englishmen; and says, that though the art of softening offensive tenets had not yet found its way into Popish books, it was extensively used in conversation; and he most truly says, “Popery spoken and written are two things. They deliver the opinion of their Church with such mitigation, as those who care to please, not to inform, adapting the voice of the Church to the liking of the hearer. Resolved to outface all evidence, they make fair weather of their foulest opinions!” A zealous Protestant clergyman in Scotland said lately, that, in this respect, his experience was exactly similar to Bishop

Hall's; as his chief difficulty among his own people in coping with the Romish priest was, that the Papists deny everything to be a doctrine of Popery to which their intended convert objects. Thus, like quicksilver, they escape being touched. The intended convert, worthy man! believing every one as truthful as himself, observes that being all his life accustomed reverently to worship a Holy Trinity in Unity, he cannot reconcile his mind to a Church which says, in a standard work, "The Devotions of the Sacred Heart," "Mary is the mother of grace, — Mary is the gate of Heaven, — Mary is our advocate and media-trix." The priest cordially agrees with him, that no worship is due to the Virgin Mary; but the Protestant, not yet quite satisfied, reminds his teacher that Pope Gregory XVI., at the baptism of the present Duke de Bordeaux, said, "Let us invoke for him the protection of the *mother of God*, the queen of angels — our greatest hope; yea, the entire ground of our hope." "That seems very like Marianism, and very unlike Christianity!" observes the proselyte; but he is assured, that these too-celebrated words of adoration do not imply worship; therefore he endeavours to believe so, and next observes, that it does not look well for a Church of God to conceal from any of its members the oracles of God, or for priests to keep the key of knowledge only,

that they may lock out others: but on this point he is again enlightened. It is a mere invention of the Protestants, his teacher assures him, that the Scottish peasantry in former Popish times had to conceal the Bible or die in its defence, — it is quite a mistake that Wickliffe's bones were dug up nearly a century after his death, and ignominiously burned, for having given the translated Bible to England, when the Pope would only have allowed a mutilated Latin edition; and it must be a mistake in history, the pioneer of Popery maintains, to record that in the reign of Henry V. a law was passed against the perusal of the Bible in English to this effect: “ Whosoever they are that shall read the Scriptures in the mother tongue, they shall forfeit lande, catel, lif, and goodes, from theyre heyers for ever; and so be condemned for heretykes to God, enemies to the crowne, and most arrant traitors to the land.”

Truthful Protestants will perseveringly believe what Romanists say of their religion; and therefore, by this short and summary process of denying whatever it is inconvenient to acknowlege in the Popish Church, a hesitating convert has all his scruples peacefully set at rest; and like a wayward child who has extracted a number of impossible promises from his nurse, he falls quietly asleep, and is carried over by the priest, blind-

fold and helpless, to Rome, there to be stripped of liberty, fortune, and conscience.

The doctrine of un-questioning, un-resisting, un-thinking obedience to the will of another man, because he is a priest or a Pope, has long been the favourite subject of Romish teaching, and the secret of all its power. A Protestant has every day the trouble of consulting his conscience, and of making up his mind how it would be right and best to act; but the Papist has given his conscience into the keeping of a priest, like a man who, tired of consulting his watch, is persuaded by a stranger to let him keep it, and lazily to be told from time to time when he ought to rise, or go to bed, to dine, or to drive, to walk, or to rest.

Popish converts certainly have their powers of believing tested when shown the head of one Miniato, who, after he was beheaded, deliberately took up his own head and walked away, crossed a river, and ascended to the top of a hill, then *kissed his head*, and laid him down and died. In those dark ages, people seem to have carried their heads under their arms, as more modern gentlemen carry their hats. St. Dennis, also, followed the same Popish fashion; but the art is lost now.

If any man saw another giving a precious diamond for coin which he believed in his very soul to be false, could he refrain from earnestly saying so? And when young proselytes are told to hazard the

pearl of their salvation on the truth of such fables, can any Christian withhold his testimony to their utter falsehood? Few young persons will probably believe that such stories are seriously told; but Mr. Newman has publicly declared his obedient belief in such legends, intended for truths, as the following, which cannot but be, like the miracles of Prince Hohenlohe, both laughed at and deplored: —

Every believing Papist, then, is bound to believe, whether he believes it or not, that St. Raymond was transported over the sea on his cloak, probably water-proof, — that the axeman could not sever St. Cecilia's head from her body, — that St. Winfred's head became transformed into a miracle-working well, — that the father of St. Furcens having married a king's daughter who was condemned to be burned, she shed such a flood of tears as put out the fire, — that the piety of St. Fechin was so fervent, that when he bathed himself in cold water, the water became almost boiling hot, — that St. Goar of Treves, wanting a beam to hang up his cape, hung it on a sunbeam, where it remained until he took it down, — that St. Mael, when in want of fishes, caught them on the dry ground, — that St. Francis Xavier restored more than a thousand blind to sight, more than a thousand lame to the use of their limbs, *more than a thousand dead to life!*

Also, the same St. Francis, for the benefit of five hundred travellers, turned salt water into fresh,—an art which modern science has yet to discover. St. Mochua having killed some stags to feed his followers in a forest, ordered their picked bones to be replaced in the skins; after which, by an incantation, the stags, being restored to life, leaped up and ran into the woods.* The miracles said to have been performed by wood shown as the holy cross, are innumerable; but there are pieces enough exhibited to build the largest-sized man-of-war. The chains of St. Peter are exhibited, of which filings have been sold at a high price for several centuries, yet they never diminish in size or weight; and though the holy coat of Treves, first shown in 1196, is supposed to be the garment of our Lord without rent or seam, yet there are pieces of it displayed in many other cities, and in the Church of Santa Prasside at Rome. It is confidently said that old established Romanists observe with contemptuous ridicule, as mere upstarts in religion, the new English apostates at Rome, who make themselves beyond measure ridiculous, and perplex the Pope himself, by their enthusiastic devotion to images, relics, beads, legends, and other superstitious rubbish,—the newest converts always displaying

* Alban Butler's Lives of the Saints.

the largest organ of credulity. England is at present haunted by the ghost of the middle ages ; and, as Mr. Seymour says, “ men sigh for a religion which is replete with the convents and the castles, the monkery and the chivalry, the priestly power and the superstitious observances, the picturesqueness and the poetry, of the middle ages. The former was an age for devoutly believing everything, whether true or untrue ; for burning witches and heretics, and believing in priestly infallibility.”

The Papists make a strange distinction between mortal and venial sins. They decide that a small theft is only venial, yet the Bible authorises no such distinction ; for Eve stole only an apple, but, her heart being in rebellion against God when she did so, the smallness of the temptation seems greatly to aggravate the turpitude of her crime. By that truly miserable imposition of persuading kind-hearted dupes that there is a purgatory for venial sins from which the departed spirits of their friends may be brought out, the Pope gains those revenues with which he sits in splendour within his gorgeous Vatican, built with the pilfered patrimony of the orphan, and the last scudo of the widow. What a contrast was Christ in the desert offering pardon to penitent sinners without money and without price, to the Pope on his throne selling bargains of indulgence to

sinners, even to those whose names and whose crimes, and whose repentance he does not care to ascertain! If power were vested in any human beings to purchase their friends out of purgatory, or to pray them out of it, how cruel would those be who ceased, day or night, to use their efforts, and how inhuman of the priest to wait till he was paid a good market price for his intercession! Christianity is a religion for the poor; but Marianism requires its votaries to be rich, in order to pay for absolutions: and Mr. Seymour mentions a rector having complained loudly in Ireland of the difficulty he found in collecting his tithes, when the priest said, “ You must be after taking a lease from me of some acres of purgatory, which you will find the most profitable farm that you ever farmed.”

Borgia, the most infamous of popes or of men, who insulted heaven and earth by his vices, was the first to claim a power of granting indulgences.

No monarch ever gained by taxes on the living half so much as the Pope by taxes on the dead, “ making merchandise of men’s souls;” though there seems in Scripture no more foundation for the doctrine of purgatory to rest on, than for the Indian transmigration of souls.

Though the Bible says, “ How hardly shall a rich man enter the kingdom of heaven,” the Pope seems to intimate that only the rich can afford to

do so ; and, like Charon, he will ferry no one over the Styx without passage-money paid in advance. Rome promises like a quack doctor, puts the patient on a diet of starvation, enjoins perfect obedience, recommends severe flagellation, takes all the patient's fortune as a fee, and performs no cure ; but lost souls cannot return from another world to complain of the deception. A former Duke of Burgundy gave as his reason for becoming a Papist, that the confessor had promised to take his condemnation on himself, should his Royal Highness be punished for renouncing Protestantism. In Spain, the monks go about, bearing a large lantern, with the glass painted to represent two naked persons enveloped in flames, to work upon the generous sympathy and terror-stricken devotion of those who have lost relations,—especially at a funeral, where a begging priest goes round, addressing every one in dolorous accents. He calls out at last, like an auctioneer, “ Will nobody give more ! Oh ! will no one give more for the soul of the departed ! The holy souls, brother ! remember the holy souls ! ”

Were Protestants obliged, like the Papists, to believe that the punishment of their venial sins was thus to continue for an uncertain number of centuries, how could it be possible to die in peace ! A single year of torment were sufficient to appal

the stoutest heart ; but the text in which Luther found dying comfort was this : “ The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all* sin.” “ Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord ! Yea, saith the Spirit, that they rest from their labours.” Many a death-bed the Author has witnessed, of deep, solemn resignation grounded on the certain hope that Christ’s is a finished work, and that those who trust in Him shall never be confounded. Three sisters, now in heaven, have bequeathed her their dying testimony that God giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ ; and with feelings of grateful emotion she remembers how the serene glory of Scripture shed its sacred light over days of sorrow, and nights of watching, and weeks of ever-darkening suspense. All is over now ; but the remembrance, which is inestimably precious, that each in turn departed, calmly, solemnly, and most deliberately expressing their trust in that Saviour whom they had loved through life, and who was both willing and able to give them a place among His own redeemed. The recollection of so serene and peaceful an end seems now, to survivors, a sunbeam in every gathering cloud. Their faith was pure as it came from God, like the breeze on the mountain, or the stream in the valley ; but the superstitious and delirious inventions of men appear in melancholy comparison, like some unnatural and

intoxicating potion calculated to cause either torpor or delirium.

Coleridge declares that "during the middle ages the Papacy was nothing but a confederation of the learned men in the west of Europe against the barbarism and ignorance of the times;" so that the Pope was then merely like Stanislaus, king of Poland, an elected sovereign. Who can doubt that now he claims a right divine to govern wrong. Let Protestants compare Spain, Portugal, and Italy, enslaved and degraded under his rapacious rule, with England, now a model of prosperous industry and intellectual vigour,—compare Ireland with Scotland,—compare any Protestant Irish village with any Popish one,—and then compare the inhabitants!

From all history we learn that many of the Popes, though held up to the reverential adoration of mortals, have, nevertheless, astonished the world by their flagrant vices; and many a Pope, at Rome, might have quoted the lines of Pope, the poet,—

"I own I'm proud;—I must be proud, to see
Men not afraid of God afraid of me."

Who could believe in a religion which justifies its followers in doing wrong! yet the twelve Cæsars were not so luxurious in their extravagance, nor more depraved in their habits, than many who have sat in the *soi-disant* chair of

St. Peter, tyrannising over the consciences of better men. However undeserving a Pope may be in matters temporal, yet St. Peter is still supposed to support him in matters spiritual ; but if Adam lost the likeness to God by merely tasting the forbidden fruit once, surely the flagrant vices and total infidelity of many Popes should forfeit their claim to be considered the image of Christ on earth, and to be called His Holiness. Cardinal Baronius, an eminent Roman Catholic historian, agrees with Boccaccio's Jew in opinion, that we might almost be convinced of a superstition having more than human aid, which has so long survived the extraordinary vices of its leaders. " Many," says Cardinal Baronius, " were monsters horrible to behold. Stephen VII., Bishop of Rome, a ringleader in every vice, entered like a thief, and died, as he deserved, by the rope. John XII., A.D. 956, was found guilty, in a Roman synod, of blasphemy, perjury, sacrilege, adultery, incest, and murder. Benedict IX., A.D. 1033, a boy-Pope, created at the age of ten or twelve years, spent his days in debauchery, rapine, and murder, and sold the Apostolic See for 1500*l.* to Gregory VI. Boniface VIII., A.D. 1294, denied the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the immortality of the soul ; and is said to have entered the Popedom like a fox, reigned like a lion, and died like a dog. The

actual reign of a female Pope is historically proved, and also that Alexander VI. died from taking, by mistake, the poison he had prepared for another. There have been at least twenty-four fierce schisms about who was Pope; and, in 1044, there were three claiming infallibility—Benedict, Sylvester, and Gregory—who all fulminated excommunications against each other. The triple crown must then have been most appropriate, when the Popedom had become, as an ancient author says, “a three-headed beast, rising from the gates of hell.” Again, from 1378 to 1429, where was the Pope’s infallibility when two were fiercely anathematising each other, and each annulling the acts of his rival. Cardinals have confuted cardinals, saints have condemned saints, and councils reprobated councils; even Pope Adrian VI. said, “Many of the Popes of Rome have been heretics;” therefore they were not infallible, or Adrian was not infallible in saying so: but if God says to the Church of Laodicea, merely for being lukewarm, “I will spue thee out of my mouth,” what will be said to the Church of Rome!

The only real miracle which the Popish Church has ever wrought, is the miracle of imposing on the world so long, and raising its head again in England now. At sundry periods in past years there have been various temporary hallucinations

of the public mind, which, after causing the most lamentable calamities to those who first plunged into them, fortunately passed away, as it must be hoped that this taste among the young people for Romanism may at last do. When an unfortunate man, in a state of temporary delirium not long since, threw himself from the top of the London Monument, so many became inclined to follow his example, that the door of admission had to be locked. Whenever the newspapers have occasion to relate the particulars of a peculiarly atrocious murder, the probability is that several more will ensue. The South Sea mania and the Railway mania both ruined those who became excited on the subject; but all these are as nothing compared to the utter ruin of young persons who, building a castle in the air of monastic perfection, break up all the ties of life to be buried alive in the irrevocable imprisonment of a monastery, there to wear out life in all the frivolities of superstition, and in an imprisonment beyond the reach of help either from legal or friendly succour. The Bible has been called “the Magna Charta of human nature;” but no *Habeas Corpus*, even in free and happy England, extends within the cloistered wall. It is like the Happy Valley of Rasselas, only in respect of not being able to get out; and those who know best say, that an old nun is like an old baby, her mind reduced to a mere second

childhood by leading a life of unreasoning obedience. Taught to believe that the most flagrant vices do not diminish the sacredness of the papal character, and to consider the priest as his equally privileged representative, able to teach right while he acts wrong, her religion consists of empty forms, her prayers of ceaseless repetitions, spoken in a language she does not understand, and addressed to saints who neither hear nor can answer them. If a monk or nun have genuflected with the right knee instead of the left,—if they have eaten fish dressed with lard instead of butter,—they must confess that ; or if they have let a book fall, or if they have drunk a cup of milk on Ash Wednesday ; and, in short, as Sir Walter Scott, the keen foé to Popery, who kept the Abbots out of Abbotsford, says of a priest-taught nun —

“ The deadliest sin her mind could reach,
Was of monastic rule the breach.”

Whatever affliction is necessary to render the Christian character perfect, God has promised that He will himself send. Pain, suffering, or adversity must be welcomed when they come from His unerring hand, but man may wait till they do come. He has no right to commit a moral suicide—to put out the eyes of his soul, and to degrade himself into a mere breathing image, without will, responsibility, feeling, or conscience,

at the bidding of any one except his Creator, who surely knew his own mind when He endowed him with these noble and inalienable gifts, for special and important duties, not that he should himself clip the wings of hope and joy, of freedom and intellect, for ever.

In La Trappe is to be found the closest imitation of insanity that the mind of a professedly sane person could possibly devise. In lunatic asylums many remain dumb for years, others would cut or maim their bodies, many will only lie on the floor ; the patients, in both cases, have their heads shaved, they do not sleep, they court the most self-murdering austerities, they shun society, and disown every tie of old attachment. In short, all the Popish perfections may be found equally in Bedlam or in La Trappe. If it be a crime in the Romish Church for a man to read the Bible or to think for himself, it seems equally one to be in good health, if spectators may judge from the extreme fasting and want of sleep commended now in the life of Alphonso Liguori, and other recently canonised saints of 1839. Such candidates for canonisation might call it religion to cut the nose off their faces, but if not ordered to do so, it is no acceptable sacrifice. They might try, as an additional austerity, to live without breathing, or at least to limit very strictly the number of times they are to breathe in an

hour. It would be a perfectly new exercise of self-denial to try whether existence could possibly be maintained by inhaling breath only once in ten minutes; and a man's whole thoughts would thus be usefully absorbed in this effort to resist nature, while continuing life on a plan never intended in his creation.

“ In this present year, 1852 *, at the monastery of Mount St. Bernard, in Leicestershire, a penitent is ordered sometimes to lie down at the church door, and permit his brethren to walk over him. Might not such a man ask his superior, ‘ Is thy servant a dog?’ There the monks are not permitted to have any will of their own, and are even frequently required to pray for what the superior desires in his own mind, without being at all acquainted with what that desire is. The ordinary monks, numbering forty, and chiefly from Ireland, are not permitted to speak even to each other, without special leave from the superior; and they can only make known their wants by prescribed signs. Their food consists of only one meal in the day, and that is restricted to vegetables, while they are not allowed a fire even in winter. Seven services, all in Latin, are performed in the church during the day and night; the monks wash their own clothes, wear no linen, and only shave or wash once a week, and a grave

* Chambers' Journal, No. 413.

is always kept open to remind the brethren of their latter end. Every Friday morning they perform what is called the 'discipline,' which consists in lashing their backs with a whip of many thongs. One of them wore an iron chain, with sharp spikes, round his waist and next his skin; but this individual has since deserted the monastery, and taken refuge in Protestantism—fortunate man to have thus escaped from the greatest enemy to human happiness."

Guizot calls the Reformation "The great insurrection of human thought against authority;" and truly the Popish faith inculcates a slavish annihilation of mind.

As Dr. Johnson says, "whatever makes the past, the distant, or the future predominate over the present, raises us in the dignity of thinking beings;" and no doubt there is something elevating to a man's own mind when he feels that, for the interests of an invisible world, he is relinquishing all that is seen and temporal; yet how many have done the same upon perfectly false principles! Not only do Hindoos and Dervishes deny themselves as much as Popish recluses, but misers, from the mere paltry love of hoarding money, will be more abject than beggars in their half-starved lives merely to multiply gold, that they never spend or even see.

Dr. Abercromby has recorded his opinion that

madness is the frequent consequence of meditating unceasingly on any one topic, and especially on those awful subjects connected with religion which are in their immeasurable importance almost too overwhelming for the strongest human intellect. The condition for which God originally created man was to be one of bodily labour, not of uninterrupted sedentary contemplation; therefore, an existence of thoughtful leisure absolutely requires some active, energetic employment to break in upon the continuous thread of mental excitement. The Doctor says he has known a too-meditative patient, on the verge of becoming insane, perfectly restored by the forcible diversion of his thoughts when a marriage occurred among his near relations; but no such cheerful remedy can be found to cure the care-for-nothing and care-for-nobody inmate of a monastery.

This explanation of insanity by Dr. Abercromby most rationally accounts for the supernatural visions, the ecstatic revelations, and strange apparitions enjoyed by those who have long been exclusively absorbed by meditation on Popish doctrines. Bishop Heber remarks that, from India, all over the nations of Asia, the idea prevails, that by excluding all sublunary objects, a devotee becomes absorbed in the Divinity; and he adds, that Hindoo ascetics remain for days almost without food, while their minds are fixed on one

object, pronouncing the mysterious name of God till they become, as they imagine, inspired. How much this resembles the fifty "Hail Marys" of the Popish Church; and when the Romanists obtain sufficient influence over an intended convert, he is made to lead nearly the same life as Bishop Heber's Hindoo devotees. By the fastings and austerities of Lent they are brought into a state of low fever, which prepares a credulous young person, his soul and body held together by a mere pack-thread, to see visions or to dream dreams. Washington Irving says of Mahomet, "His enthusiastic and visionary spirit was gradually wrought up by solitude, fasting, prayer, and meditation; and irritated by bodily disease into a state of temporary delirium, in which he fancied he received a revelation from heaven." Socrates believed himself to be attended by a familiar spirit; the poet Tasso strenuously maintained that he saw an angel often, with whom he frequently conversed; and the late Sir Robert Liston was visited every afternoon by the spectre of a little old woman, who sat on the opposite side of the fire, and looked benignly at him. If he could have fancied the apparition to be any saint in the Roman calendar, this would have been an excellent Popish vision, but the unpoetical red cloak vulgarised the ecstatic illusion most sadly. Bishop Berkeley one day, after long

and deep meditation, saw a vision of himself lying dead. He had presence of mind enough to ring the bell, and to feel his own pulse, keeping his eye firmly fixed on his own apparition, right opposite to him. It turned out that he was in a high fever, and the brain-image died away as the door opened. Coleridge also observed something very like this at Grasmere, and described the vision to a person present while he experienced it; and the late Earl Grey was said to have been haunted by the vision of a bloody head.

Visions, legends, and apparitions prevailed much during the persecutions in Scotland, where nothing was more common than for a covenanter by the lonely hill-side, to see an angel bringing him some special message from God,—at one time commanding the murder of Archbishop Sharpe, and at another urging the visionary himself to the most death-like austerities. Much of the crazy fanaticism more recently exhibited by the Mormons and Irvingites, arose probably from similar religious phantasmagoria. Some years since, an old woman, peculiarly distinguished for her important revelations among the disciples of Irving in his unknown tongue, rose in front of the gallery, with a look of wild excitement, wishing to be heard. The officiating clergyman made a hurried signal for implicit attention, but on this occasion the supposed prophetess spoke, to the

consternation of all present, in good broad Scotch, saying, " It has been revealed to me that our minister is a hypocrite!"

One of the most important converts who has recently professed Popery, made this mournful declaration ; " If I had not gone over to Rome, I must have gone mad." It is greatly to be feared that many do both, having, according to Dr. Abercromby's idea, carefully cultivated insanity, by uninterruptedly, under a system of starvation, thinking, meditating, pondering, reflecting, and considering over and over and over the same ideas, and repeating word for word the same prayers, till they put their minds to sleep, as if monotonously rocked in a cradle. If men of classical erudition, elegant literature, and mental acuteness, who seem born to command the minds of all others, fall sometimes, like Sir Thomas More, into a bathos of idolatry that would shame an infant, it is because they have made themselves mere pieces of religious clock-work, directed in every thought and action by those who have an interest in making them devout idiots, and in keeping up this delirious subjection. A very influential Papist published a book not long since, called " Extatics," so completely written *en tête montée*, that the Romanists themselves hastily suppressed it ; but every friend of truth and of human nature must be desirous that the real source of such

visions should be clearly understood as being, on Dr. Abercromby's testimony, the result of feverish illusions produced by extreme fasting, extreme thinking, and extreme anxiety of mind.

When a Protestant clergyman endeavours to convert the young to holiness, let them consider that the only ultimate object is, openly above board, to preserve them in that "*liberty where-with Christ hath made his people free*;" but when a Popish priest begins to argue with the young, let each seriously remember that the ultimate end in view is, to extinguish the sacred lamp of conscience which God himself has lighted in every human mind, and to substitute priestly authority; to carry off the Holy Bible dictated by God's own Spirit, and to substitute volumes of delirious legends; to take a converted girl from the parents selected for her by God, and to substitute a father confessor, who shall learn despotically to govern herself and her family by knowing all her secret thoughts; and that, finally, while the Protestant clergyman will teach her how to be happy in Christian usefulness within the home appointed by God, the ultimate view of the Popish priest is, that she shall desert that home, forsake every cheerful duty which nature points out, and stripped of all her possessions, shroud herself in a scene of Hindoo austerities; her room like the condemned cell in a jail, and her whole property re-

duced to a string of beads, a volume of legends, and a wooden image. One such triumph to Romanism the Author has recently seen, of youth, beauty, rank and fortune, all during this month buried within a priestly prison for life. In the dissolute state of Popish countries, men think that no "unprotected female" can preserve her own reputation, without being thus buried out of danger: but may English girls long continue to prove, as they long have done, that Protestant principle and family affection are sufficient safeguards to virtue!

In ordinary life, if the heirs of any rich respectable old gentleman endeavoured to persuade him, that it would be greatly for his good to retire in peace from the enjoyment of his liberty, friends, and fortune, into a dark cold cellar, without fire or candle, leaving all his possessions for his advisers themselves to use, the worthy man would naturally feel rather suspicious of their motives, and a little slow to be convinced; but the Author at this moment knows of several young persons who have thus at once delivered up both their purses and their lives to priestly custody.

When a monarch appoints any young officer to command a regiment, it would be disobedience, if he, in an enthusiastic fit of false humility, retired into the ranks; and when God, always wisest, ordains happiness for any young person, then let

him submit, not merely to adversity when that comes, but submit to be prosperous and happy; just as a Jesuit is equally ready, at the command of his own superior, to be a prince, a beggar, or a bricklayer.

Lord Abinger, in the House of Lords, related once a case he knew, which was rare then, though the Author could describe several such as having occurred very recently. A young man, “ who possessed 200,000*l.*, becoming a Papist, was induced forthwith, as Lord Abinger related, to resign all, to prepare his own sepulchre, to put on a hair shirt, and at length to enter a supposititious grave, delivering up his fortune to those Popish priests, who had recommended this very sensible resolution of his to have nothing and to be nothing. Let it be supposed that a priest could miraculously persuade the birds in the air, that it was an entire mistake their being endowed with the privilege to sing or to fly, because they ought rather to live out their days burrowing like moles under ground,—how would that answer the evident intention of God their Creator in giving them freedom and happiness? Paul complains that he is “ in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness;” but he by no means willingly inflicted them on himself, though he bravely submitted to them when inevitably the decree of God.

An Englishman very naturally says by his own fire-side, in his usual tone of Protestant authority, “ No confessor shall ever enter my house ; ” but let his family once become Papists, and neither bolts, bars, nor promises will keep a convert from confession, as the priest’s whole power over individuals and families depends on every Romanist believing she must lay open every secret of her own or of others to his knowledge or lose her salvation. Why do Protestants not take the same precautionary measures for the safety of their domestic circle from Popery that they would do if the scarlet fever or the small pox were raging around ? for the least prick of Popery seems, like inoculation, to change the whole mental constitution of young people ; and even the most established Christians may often advantageously remember now the warning of Scripture, “ Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.”

Like those who join the Agapemone at Hyde Park, or the miracle-working Mormons in America, each pervert to Jesuitism has his individuality at once merged in a general benefit club. A convert’s house, as well as his person, are taken instant possession of when he “ professes ; ” and he finds a priest immediately quartered upon him, who has a right to know all that passes within the four walls of his home, every private conversation he has with his wife, and the use he

makes of all his time, fortune, and thoughts. A confessor, and in some cases also a director, not appointed by himself, but by his superiors, both take office in the drawing-room, to regulate what he shall eat, drink, or speak, how his children are to be educated, and how his wife is to associate with him ; and he must do penance if an idea enters his head that he could act or think for himself. Thus the former master of an independent home finds that he is suddenly in partnership with a selection of guests not to be got rid of, who entirely remodel his whole personal habits and his whole establishment. Yet who is afraid of this Popish aggression in private families ? For those priests who are to gain all it must be the most exciting pursuit in the world ;—at one time stalking a rich old miser, at another time bringing down a brace of young collegians, and then a wealthy widow : but what is sport to one party is worse than death to the other.

The Author can imagine that a set of dissolving views might be rather instructive to young Protestants, such as the following. An aged clergyman on a death-bed, knowing from his own feelings as a father how God as a father pitith his children, is represented leaving his last injunctions, like Jacob, to his numerous family :—but that picture disappears, and the same man is seen stretched on a hair-cloth pallet, in a solitary

cell,—no ties of kindred there to soothe his sufferings,—no children to reap a lesson of devout resignation from his prayers and blessing,—but his hours of agony worn away in the vain repetition of “hail Marys!” as well as in unrelentingly aggravating his own sufferings by starving and scourging, as if the Creator himself did not best know how much affliction is necessary for our good, and promise in kindness to inflict it. Another dissolving view is presented of a sorrowful widow mourning the death of her only child, but reading in her Bible, with tears of mitigated sorrow, how Christ, in person (not by deputing a saint), succoured and consoled the widow of Nain. The picture changes to one of the same widow, kneeling with a row of beads in her hand, surrounded by a perfect catacomb of old bones, and with her streaming eyes fixed devoutly on a wooden image of St. Anthony, painted like the figure-head of a ship.

Mr. Seymour says: “I have seen and handled some thousands of the teeth, and pieces of the bones, and parings of nails, and locks of the hair of apostles, and martyrs, and saints. I have seen the people bow and prostrate themselves before them with every outward act of devotion and admiration, *though I believe in my soul they are the grossest frauds, and vilest impostures that ever disgraced or cursed the world.*”

In the Holy Bible Christians are told to obey the king as supreme ; but they do not necessarily require to have a picture of the sovereign always before their eyes to keep them obedient, any more than they require a crucifix to remind them of their never-forgotten Saviour, whom to obey is their hourly duty and endeavour, without any visible object of worship.

A cardinal in England holds his court now with more than royal state, which the Pope might envy. The curtain rises like that in a theatre, and he is disclosed on a majestic throne, his priests and attendants standing around almost worshipping him, and no seat allowed for those Englishmen calling on business, who own no sovereign but their own in England, and no Mediator but one, whom “ not having seen we love.”

The present prime minister is a descendant of that Lord Russell whose last words on the scaffold were, that he feared Popery would be destructive to English liberty : and may all who have any influence remember now the war-cry of the Reformation, “ Down with the Popish tiara of Rome, and up with the Protestant crown of England.” An alarmed old lady said lately, in a tone of terror, to the author, “ If the Pope once gets his toe into England, there is no saying who may be persuaded to kiss it !” Certainly England at present needs that every man should do

his duty, not only by voting members into Parliament who will support a free Bible and a free press, but also by discouraging the smallest glimpse of Popery from coming in at the key-hole of his own door, or the key itself will soon be taken from him. The Jesuits, that sect now aiming at supremacy in Britain, are dreaded even by Romanists, and have been repeatedly banished from the Papal States, and from every kingdom in Europe, for their clandestine intrigues. As crimson is to pink, as cream is to milk, as laudanum is to the poppy, so is Jesuitism to all other sects in the Romish Church.

A Papist receives the whole system called Popery because it is taught by a certain number of Bishops and Priests, who say they are infallible expounders of the truth of God. It was by following out the same principle that the Jews imbrued their hands in the blood of the Son of God. That act was performed in submission to *church authority*; for it is written, “The Chief Priests persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas and destroy Jesus.” And certainly the Jewish Priests could produce credentials of Divine authority such as the Priests of Rome cannot.

England may now be compared to a venerable oak of many centuries’ growth, freely waving its tall head in the breeze of heaven; but already

there are invisible caterpillars gnawing at its *greenest* and freshest branches, which, if all do not unite in checking their progress, will at length, by the withering influence of religious despotism, lay her public and domestic liberty in the dust.

The Author, having owed the happiness of her whole life to Bible Truths, feels bound most solemnly to warn the young now against being led to trust in the broken bridge of Popish Legends. The process of conversion she can describe from the authentic acknowledgments of a young person, who has since been drawn into the snare, and from the case of others recently entrapped, without any idea at first, to how much they became so rashly pledged. A Protestant girl, when yet in her teens, is taught, with every other necessary acquirement, to read her Bible, to understand her catechism, and to prepare for confirmation, but without having her mind perplexed by seeking certainty in many theological distinctions, not essential to salvation, nor noticed in Scripture, and much disputed among the early fathers, whose writings Archbishop Usher took twenty years anxiously to examine, and still remained a Protestant. The young girl meets in some friend's house an agreeable drawing-room missionary of the Popish persuasion, who enters into a rallying discussion of Romanism, and, to

conceal the tremendous change that would be involved in a conversion, he talks cheerfully of people "going over to Rome" in the same half-jesting tone in which he might have mentioned the probability that a young lady is about to be married. Gradually her vanity is raised by the apparent respect with which this good-humoured antagonist receives any little arguments which in the school-room she has ever happened to hear against Romanism. He seems almost to give her hopes that she may convert him; but instead of catching the prisoner, the prisoner is catching her. This obliging Papist next offers his young antagonist the loan, privately, of some excellent books, "not at all dangerous, which even the strictest Protestants admire." There is Romanism lurking in every page. The contest between a practised controversialist and an inexperienced young lady once begun, resembles the wrestling of a grown man with a little baby, who fancies it is conquering, while he laughingly pretends to be pulled along against his will; or it is as if any one took a sledge-hammer to break an egg. One argument used by an Irish priest once was this:—"You cannot deny that St. Paul wrote a whole Epistle to the Romans; but when did he ever pen a line to you Protestants?" The intended convert, unaccustomed to controversy, thought this unanswerable. By degrees the books lent are no longer

“milk for babes,” but strong meat; and the Protestant girl, carefully educated as Protestant girls are, becomes aghast with consternation, after being lent a book of Confession, to see all which it contains! Still there is a Popish spell thrown over her not so easily to be broken. She rushes to a Protestant minister, and asks him to explain in half an hour, the whole subject of Popish Infallibility, Apostolical Succession, and the Gorham case, or she must immediately go over to Romanism. This is of course not in a couple of hours completely done, therefore she too frequently hurries to some leader of the movement party, himself rushing headlong towards Romanism, who only sends on the agitated young inquirer faster than himself, trimming the sails and guiding the helm apparently for a Protestant port, till he wrecks it at last among Popish quicksands.

“If any man can prove the following articles by any one plain sentence, out of the Scriptures, — or out of the works of the Old Fathers, — or by a canon of any old General Council, — or by any practice of the Primitive Church, — then I promise to go over to his party.

“That there was any private mass in the world for the space of 600 years after Christ.—Or, that there was any communion ministered to the people under one kind.—Or, that the people had their Common Prayers then in a strange tongue that

they understood not.—Or, that the Bishop of Rome was then called an Universal Bishop, or the Head of the Universal Church.—Or, that the people were then taught to believe that Christ's body is really, substantially, carnally, or naturally in the Sacrament.—Or, that His body is, or may be, in a thousand places or more, at one time.—Or, that the priest did then hold up the sacrament over his head.—Or, that the people did then fall down and worship it with godly honour.—Or, that images were then set up in the churches, to the intent that the people might worship them.—Or, that the lay people were then forbidden to read the Word of God in their own tongue.” *

Had the Author, before publishing, consulted a single friend, she might probably have received the advice given by Talleyrand to the foreign ambassadors, “*Pas trop de zèle;*” and no one can be more painfully aware than herself how liable she is to the charge of presumption in venturing to rush in with a word to the young on discussions “where angels fear to tread.”

A drowning man, however, has been sometimes preserved from destruction by an empty barrel precipitated overboard at random; and these jottings are not thrown out in vain, if they induce a single young girl calmly to persevere in the safe company of her Bible, and of tried old

* From Bishop Jewel's “Challenge to Papists.”



POPISH LEGENDS,

OR

BIBLE TRUTHS.

CHAPTER I.

“ But when did Wisdom covet length of days,
Or seek its bliss in pleasure, wealth, or praise!
No! Wisdom views with an indifferent eye
All finite joys, all blessings born to die.
The soul on earth is an immortal guest
Compell'd to starve at an unreal feast;
A spark that upward tends by Nature's force;
A stream diverted from its parent source;
A drop dissever'd from the boundless sea;
A moment parted from eternity.”

HANNAH MORE.

MATT. xxviii.

SOME men think, because they are born to estates, that they are not born to labour; but, as an old divine says, “there is no provision made for illustrious drones”—all must find employment if they would be happy on earth, and all must work at their own salvation if they would be happy in eternity.

Every man is entitled to seek for as much felicity in this world as is consistent with principle and duty; but a life degraded by sensuality and idleness can scarcely be called life, as it misses all the ennobling pleasures of this world, and all the elevating hope of a world to come. A great and good man devoting his heart, his hand, and his head to the service of God, is the master-piece of the creation; but when the pre-eminence is in everything except piety, how sad the contrast of a talented man's prospects, between this world in which they are so bright, and in another and a far better so hopelessly gloomy! When that learned but unbelieving philosopher Sir Joseph Banks was asked by a friend what his expectations after this life were, he gravely replied, "I shall do my best, and take my chance." If the philosopher had indeed done his best, by examining into Divine truth, it would have been no chance but a certainty of happiness for him. Thus do many, whose acute judgment and intellectual chemistry can find matter of thought and reflection in every other subject, glance vaguely and carelessly at those great concerns in which they have an undoubted and everlasting interest, sauntering onwards through the first stage of an immortal existence, as if life were a pathless waste, without object and without end. "How pleasing were this life of yours, fair ladies," said John Knox to Queen Mary's

maids of honour, “ if it should ever abide, and then in the end that *we* might pass to Heaven with all this gay gear ! ” Life goes on ; and as no one ever perceives the grass grow, nor the shadow advance upon the sun-dial, no more do we naturally observe the flight of time, unless leisure and reflection lead us to notice its rapid exit, and to fulfil the great business of life while time and opportunity remain ; but, in truth, no frantic maniac in an asylum is more foolish as to the affairs of this life, than the worldly man as to the affairs of eternity. The last comment of Marshal Saxe on his own earthly career was in these words, “ I have had a fine dream ! ” But the dreamer, through even so long a life as his, must awake into eternity ; and then, unlike the visions of our sleep, we shall find that life was a great reality, for every instant of which we are solemnly to be made responsible, and that if *we* merely stroll onwards with no guide but inclination, we exercise no power but that of breathing, no capacity but that of suffering, and our inevitable end must be destruction. As things appear very different by daylight from what they do by candlelight, so do the Christian and man of the world view under a perfectly different medium the pleasures and the duties of existence. The disciple of Christ employs himself in doing good throughout the neighbourhood, in reconciling differences, in studying the customs of mankind, in

reading history, and in learning whatever may render him useful or respected. He sees with a sorrowful but indulgent eye the depravity as distinctly as the misery of human nature; but without attempting to deny, he earnestly tries to remedy both: the man of pleasure, on the contrary, attends to no misery except the vexations that befall himself; and with a general bad opinion of servants, shopkeepers, and all with whom he has any dealings, he nevertheless denies the doctrine of man's natural depravity. It was a curious instance of positiveness on this point that a learned man, having lately read through a history detailing the whole horrors of the old French Revolution, declared that it had not yet convinced him of the natural depravity of human nature. Yet unwilling as men are to be witnesses against themselves, they cannot but see in whatever is connected with the disposition, the conduct, or the prospects of man, the strong tendency of everything to go wrong, and of nothing to go right. The natural progress of all on earth to be amiss, appears as the only perpetual motion discoverable among mankind. Leave a merry party of children without control to enjoy their holiday, and before many hours they will be plunged in mischief and discord; or hire into your establishment the best set of servants that can be found, all recommended as perfect treasures, and if left without careful judicious

superintendence, a very short time will transform the good into bad. How singularly was this evidenced in the household of Hannah More, whose domestics were selected with the utmost circumspection; but, owing to a laxity of superintendence during her more advanced years, the sad result was, as described in her Memoirs, that "every crime was committed in her house, except murder," and she became so completely a prisoner to her own servants, that only by an ingenious contrivance could she succeed in conveying a letter to her friends, which summoned them at last to her rescue!

"There's something in this world amiss
Will be unriddled by-and-bye."

It was the remark of a very misanthropical author, that there are only two classes of persons in this world, "the found out, and the not found out!"—But there is a third class in those who have found out themselves, who know their own weakness and natural depravity, but who have set their whole hearts steadily and earnestly to seek the Divine aid, in bringing about within their own minds an entire re-action for good, following the excellent advice of Pythagoras, that "every man, when about to do a wrong action, should above all things in the world stand in awe of himself, and dread the witness within him." Truly conscience is an officer so true to his trust, that once roused he can neither

be bribed off his duty, nor begged off, till he has tortured the sinner to agony ; and it is at the same time remarkable that a sense of sin is in men of every description. The first token of religion having dawned on the soul with the man of refined education as well as with the ignorant New Zealander, the first spark of life in his soul is attended with the newly-awakened consciousness of guilt. Though all Christians unfortunately live below Christianity, yet there have been in every age a few perseveringly constant in their endeavours to obtain and to benefit by Divine grace, lest, while there is a pardon in their Bibles, there should be none for themselves. Such men, contemplating the immeasurable distance between their own best exertions to be holy, and the model proposed for their imitation, would feel depressed and forlorn in contrasting the mighty task before them with their own utter inability to think a good thought, were it not for the hope derived from Christ's mediation. How truly did the profligate son of Bishop Burnet estimate the difficulty of entering on a life of piety, when he said to his father, "I am going to begin a work of much more difficulty and labour than your History of the Reformation,—being the reformation of myself!"

When a breach of amity takes place between two mere human beings, of which the offended person is greatly the superior, his dignity might

prevent him seeking a reconciliation ; while, on the other side, the inferior condition of the offender intimidates him from attempting one. Unless a third person, therefore, interpose between both, the breach remains incurable ; but if the culprit secure an advocate who is sure to be heard, — if the son intercede with his father, — then surely there may be a full and assured expectation of pardon. Will not Christ, then, willingly pray for those on whose behalf he was ready to die ? and is not our being desired to ask His mediation an implied promise that it shall be granted ?

“ Through clouds and storms a summer breaks,
To shine on the redeem'd.”

While sensual pleasures are soon and certainly interrupted by satiety and weariness, those of the mind and imagination increase the longer they are enjoyed and the more deeply they are partaken. Those only who have scientifically studied natural history, or, like Pliny and Paley, written books upon it, can in any degree estimate the marvellous wisdom and contrivance displayed in the formation of those objects by which we are surrounded ; and it has been a subject of dispute sometimes, whether the wonders of the telescope or of the microscope are most fitted to excite astonishment and admiration, — the millions of stars hung in illimitable space in their ceaseless beauty and mag-

nificence, or the most insignificant atom, even an earwig's wing, disclosing workmanship more elaborate and beautiful than any watch. There are few earthly delights comparable to those of science, while the philosopher investigates the secrets of nature, in the knowledge of which he may advance, perhaps, with added enjoyment, during half a century of enlightened research and increasing interest; but if his mind has limited itself to the mere creation, without looking to the Divine Creator, then his connection with nature dies with himself. His mind, like a steam-engine without a driver, though powerful, is dangerous as well as ill directed; and conscience probably at the last will ring a peal of approaching vengeance for talents so wasted, and opportunities so unpardonably lost. It can scarcely, however, be expected, that if the bent and stream of a man's soul has been in opposition to his Creator through long years of study and thought, the sun of God's mercy should go back ten degrees on behalf of the unbelieving philosopher at the last hour.

As Lord Capel so well remarked, "If men take such pains to gather thorns and thistles, what should we do for figs and grapes! and if we court this world, now she is full of troubles, what should we do if she were beautiful!" Every pursuit in life becomes dignified with endless interest, and illuminated with unbounded hope, as soon as it is

associated with religion ; in which there are mysteries which the longest-headed reason could never fathom, and revelations which the longest-lived mind can never exhaust. The difference of light and knowledge, between a man of mere natural science, and a man whose science is expanded by religion, is like the disparity between looking at the world through a key-hole or out of a window.

In order to know what we are, the Christian must ascertain what he should be ; but as he who never saw the sun may admire a lamp, so those who have never studied the life and character of Christ our Redeemer, may think well of ordinary men, especially as we cannot see, like our omniscient God, into motives, by which alone actions are to be estimated. The more closely we examine the earthly career of our Lord and Master, the more brightly does it shine, and the more do we perceive that his love to man exhibits all the best attributes of human friendship, without the flaws and deficiencies ; therefore, each Christian should claim all his offers of mercy and kindness as if they were made to himself alone, feeling grateful in proportion, and happy. We should study the Scriptures with as keen an interest as if they had been penned but yesterday ; as if we had seen the persons described in them, and stood in the places where they were spoken and written ; as if we had heard Christ preach ; as if we had

seen Him suffer; and as if the Bible were addressed to no one but ourselves.

Those who give a gloomy representation of religion, are like the spies who brought back an evil report of Canaan, which discouraged the people; but those who testify their own true felicity, are like the spies not only returning with a good report, but also with a cluster of grapes to be shared with their friends. Every Christian is sent upon earth to do all that he can, in imitation of his Divine Saviour, for the souls and bodies of himself, and of all over whom he can obtain any salutary influence. A servant entrusted with the charge of his master's child, has but two things committed to his care, very different in value, namely, the child and the child's clothes; but it will not be sufficient to say, on his return home, that he has kept the clothes and lost the child's life, and that, like Joseph's brethren, the garment is safe, though the better part be enslaved to an enemy. All must unite heart and hand to rescue captives from Satan and enlist them for Christ; and, not satisfied with each seeking his own individual safety, the Christian, whose mind should be like a lamp continually burning, will cast an eye of interest and of compassion on those who are struggling like himself, and still more on those who "know not what they do," while heedlessly abandoning themselves to be

plundered of their everlasting souls. Can it be right that there should live immortal beings, to each of whom, in their gay, thoughtless, and prosperous career, the words of the poet might almost be applied, —

“ A perfect butterfly! — a thing
Without substance, and almost
Without shadow ! ”

Who can doubt that the man who stands indifferently by when another is robbed, without attempting to rescue the victim, commits a theft himself, and must account to God for the guilty action he criminally permitted to be done by another !

No man is made answerable whether it rain or not, because he cannot take any measures on the subject ; but each must do his part to keep the Christian vineyard clear of weeds, which is best to be done by plucking up some every day ; not in a spirit of grudgingly-given service ; not with the mangled obedience of a hypocrite ; not by acquiring only a part of the wedding-garment ; but by looking, heart and soul, to Christ for our example, in so far as we can follow him, and for our pardon, because in his pure eyes there is more evil in the best of our actions, than we see in the worst.

“ Wealth may seek us, but wisdom must be sought —
Sought before all ; but (how unlike all else
We seek on earth !) 'tis never sought in vain.”

Prayer is the solemn intercourse of earth with Heaven; but it is as necessary to have hope when we pray, as to have desire; for the great artifice of Satan is, to make men either presumptuous, or so desponding that they become as incapable of advancing on the right road, as a cripple with both limbs amputated,—sensible of his helpless misery, yet despairing of a remedy. But man, even if mutilated of every limb, as long as the breath of life remains, is a human being; and however disabled in soul, body, or spirit, is still, as a man, the subject of Christ's compassion,—more precious in his sight than the whole material universe. As love is the great engine of nature, the cement of society, and the spring of our happiness, it is also the essence of religion; and all who find their chief joy, as well as their only hope, in the love of Christ to themselves, will feel anxiously desirous that others may be encouraged and assisted to seek the same bright and glorious refuge. Who could selfishly desire to be, like Gideon's fleece, blessed with the dew of Heaven, and all around left dry? Yet there are those, though not certainly Christians, who would wish, if they were beggars, that all others should be beggars too; but if they became rich, that they only should be rich. Their candle cannot shine if another's gleam beside it; and all that is given to his neighbour, seems, in a selfish man's eye, to

be a deduction from himself. That excellent Christian, Oxenstiern, Chancellor of Sweden, being fearful lest the preferments of this world should lay him low in the next, and desirous to do all the good in his power, retreated, in his old age, from business. Being visited in retirement by Whitlocke, the English ambassador, he said to him, in taking leave, “ I have seen much of this world, but I never knew how to live till now: all the comfort I have, which is more than the world can give, is feeling the good Spirit in my heart, and reading in this good book, the Bible. You are now in the prime of your age and vigour, and in great favour and business; but all this may leave you, and you may one day better understand and relish what I say to you. Then you will find that there is more wisdom, truth, comfort, and pleasure in retiring, and turning your heart from the world to the good Spirit of God, and in reading the Bible, than in all the courts and the favours of princes.”

The pleasure of knowledge enlarges with all we learn on every subject; and especially the delight of studying Holy Scripture increases with every added hour of prayerful, earnest meditation: and such was the delight of the learned Dutch commentator, Blundelius, in writing his admirable notes on the Bible, that he passed many successive nights without going to bed; and his floor being

scattered over with folios, he used, when utterly exhausted, to make some of those learned volumes useful as pillows, and sleep upon them for a few hours, till sufficiently refreshed to resume the labour he delighted in.

“ There is a home for weary souls
By sin and sorrow driven,
When toss’d on life’s tempestuous shoals
Where storms arise, and ocean rolls,
And all is drear — but Heaven ! ”

CHAP. II.

“ In hope a king doth go to war;
In hope a lover lives full long;
In hope a merchant sails full far;
In hope just men do suffer wrong;
In hope the ploughman sows his seed;
Thus hope helps thousands at their need;
Then faint not heart among the rest,
Whatever chance, hope thou the best.”

R. ALISON.

MATT. xxiii.

IT is a well-known circumstance in a not very remote part of Scotland, that a landed proprietor there, having fallen once into a deep trance which lasted some days, the preparations were so completed for his burial that when he awoke the coffin lay beside him. Finding that invitations had been sent all round the neighbourhood to his funeral, he desired that they should not be recalled, but allowed the whole party to assemble, heard all the remarks made upon his decease, and not till the coffin was about to be lifted did he come forth to receive the cordial welcomes and congratulations of his astonished friends. Perhaps this might not be a safe experiment for many to try, respecting the opinion of those he has left behind; but it matters little com-

paratively what is said of the dead in this world, compared with what is the estimate formed of his past life in a world to come.

The foolish bravado with which some men attempt to speak of death and to meet it, is unworthy of a thinking being ; and when Frederick the Great desired to be buried in no churchyard or holy ground, but to be interred beside his dogs in the garden of Sans Souci, he exhibited a degree of mental *sans souci* insulting to human nature as well as to the God who created us, and who ordained that death shall be to all a subject of instructive and awful solemnity.

If there were no eternity hereafter, men might soon learn to think, like Democrites, that the joys, the sorrows, and sufferings of life were things merely to be laughed at ; for all the importance of our existence is derived from its responsibilities and its hopes.

Religion, as we see in the case of the Scribes and Pharisees, does not consist in assenting to a mere set of propositions, in understanding religion as we understand a science, or in empty knowledge, but in solid, influential piety. As these Jewish rulers were the great adversaries of the Gospel, it became necessary for our Lord, among their admirers, the Jews, to point out their errors, and to prove how little weight was due to their authority. Jesus, nevertheless, allows that they

are to be considered expositors of the law of Moses, which was in fact the municipal law of their state.

In the synagogues the Priests sat down while expounding the law, and rose up when they read it, and as Moses taught the Jews by giving the law, they, when explaining and enforcing it, were said to have "sat in Moses' seat." Whatever therefore from that source and station the Scribes and Pharisees inculcated, the people ought to practise, and so great was the obedience taught, in civil matters, to the early Christians, that even, under the reign of that contemptible tyrant Nero, they obeyed. They were to beware, however, of the leaven of unauthorised doctrines, which, like poison in a fountain, convey death and contagion to all who taste the streams; but as the Holy Spirit taught the Prophets and Apostles to write for us the Holy Scriptures, we must ask to be instructed by the same Spirit who taught them.

Corrupt as the tenets of the Scribes were, their works had become still worse; therefore the Jews were not to imitate those who did not practise what they preached, but who transgressed in private, as invisibly as if they had been spirits, the very traditions which they publicly enforced. A man cannot ascertain the state of another's mind and heart any more than he can judge of others even in respect to the state of their mere

bodily health. Those who look pale may be perfectly well, while those who have a high colour may be extremely ill; and it is yet more difficult for people to ascertain the state of each other's souls, but those who do good only to be seen, will probably do no good when they are not seen.

The Pharisees were a compound of pride, worldliness, ostentation, and tyranny, all concealed under the cloak of religion; but as no natural complexion looks so pure a red and white as that which is painted, so those painted sepulchres, the Scribes and Pharisees, were idolised by the people as perfect saints. They believed, that if but two men went to heaven, the one would be a Scribe and the other a Pharisee; which shows that men may be actually canonised by the superficial judgment of men, who little merit praise, for of no human beings did Christ ever speak so severely. Our Lord has called these Pharisees "whited walls, rotten sepulchres, and a generation of vipers!" This proves that it really is the duty of public men to call persons and things by their right names, and to brand vice as villany, considering truth paramount to every other consideration. If Christ called Herod "a fox," he does not expect Christians to call a fox a sheep, or a vulture a dove; yet the Roman Catholics, when they either excommunicate or pay almost divine honour to departed men, take upon themselves a

patronage to which nothing can entitle human beings in estimating each other. The Jews would have canonised these Pharisees, and nevertheless we see what the judgment of God was; let us therefore delay to condemn or to glorify our fellow-creatures till we hear the sentence of Christ when He returns to give a verdict that cannot err.

Religious men must distinguish between officers and their office, not allowing themselves to think the worse of good truths for their being preached by bad ministers, any more than of good laws for being executed by bad magistrates. If God send food by ravens rather than by angels, His own people must receive it with thankfulness, and respect the messenger for the sake of his message. It was well said by Ximenes, when great complaints were made against his government of Castile, "If I take the liberty to act, others will take the liberty to talk. When they charge me falsely, I may laugh; when truly, I must amend." Nothing certainly requires more Christian judgment and tact, than to exercise well the duty performed by the friends of Ximenes in admonishing him, and which is occasionally incumbent on those who would be conscientiously faithful towards men they love by pointing out to a friend his own faults. Well meaning people must be very sure, however, that it is unavoidably necessary before

they do so, or it may be merely a slight pretext to their own minds for envy, malice, or impertinence. When we read in history of Lord Loudon's remonstrance with Charles the First, on behalf of his countrymen, it affords a singular instance of temperate firmness, and his concluding words are admirable. "Sire, the people of Scotland will obey you in everything, with the utmost cheerfulness, provided you do not invade their religion and conscience." Daniel, the only mere man mentioned in Scripture, of whom no fault is recorded, must have exercised marvellous discretion along with his extraordinary courage, when he ventured to reprove that haughty and insolent monarch Belshazzar. On such an occasion, it seemed more likely that the courageous prophet would be dyed in his own blood, and loaded with chains of iron, than that the proud king would have honoured him, as he did, with a scarlet robe and a chain of gold; for those in the wrong are seldom the first to excuse an unwelcome truth.

"Forgiveness to the injured does belong;
But they ne'er pardon who commit the wrong."

DEYDEN.

Those are of all sinners the most inexcusable who commit the sins they condemn in others; and yet, most singular to observe, men generally censure with the most unsparing severity those

very faults in particular to which they are themselves notoriously addicted; and while Christians, who are the most lenient to others, are the most strict in their own conduct, we may see everywhere spiritual Catos on the alert to scatter censure on every one but themselves. Who is more keen in his animadversions on the passionate than a violent man; and the greatest ridicule, or the deepest censure, of avarice has proceeded from those who were notoriously misers.

A rich old man was dying some time ago, who had seemed to consider himself born for no other purpose than to see how cheaply he could live; and being told, a few days before he expired, that his aged servant had suddenly died, he bitterly exclaimed in a tone of angry sarcasm, "Foolish man! what has he been saving for all his days! he cannot take his money to Hell with him!"

"If hope, but deferr'd, may cause sickness of heart,
How dreadful to see it for ever depart."

BARTON.

The Pharisees represented the way to Heaven as narrow for others, but as broad as they pleased for themselves, pulling down by their practice what they built up by their preaching; while they laid down the law rigidly for the world in general, they were empty of good works themselves; great

talkers, but little doers ; their idea of peace was like that of too many, the having everything their own way. Arbitrary people, when all others are trampled down, denounce any one as a peace-breaker who resists ; they gag their opponents, and then consider that all is quiet.

Some men, like these Pharisees, preach so well when in the pulpit, that it seems a pity they should ever come out, but when out of the pulpit live so ill, that it seems a pity they should ever go in. Those also who court the eye of their fellow-creatures rather than of their Creator, must lose all the labour they give to so paltry an object ; and though they were to stretch and strain the very sinews of their souls to the highest point of austerity and alms, yet they exhibit but an empty and most melancholy imitation of religion. Men cannot now stand praying like the Pharisees in the corners of the streets ; but those who keep diaries of their private meditations and prayers, to be printed, published, and advertised after their death, even though that be done by surviving widows, or inconsolable husbands, have nevertheless not been sufficiently careful to "shut the door" when alone in secret communion with their Creator. They might certainly commit, before they die, to the flames those memorials which should belong only to themselves and their God, rather than hazard being in a supposititious retirement,

attended by a train of many hundreds, who are in fact to become subsequent witnesses. A Christian can scarcely deceive himself or others, when he writes down, "I am alone," and has nevertheless a shrewd guess that hereafter thousands shall know how long he meditated and prayed, and exactly what he said or thought; while, in fact, he first makes the feelings, and then describes them. Sincerity is the vital spark visible only to God, being lighted by his Holy Spirit, and there may be the image of all that is needful in the eye of fallible man, without that essence of life which is to be immortal. The clipped guinea passes current among mankind, until it be accurately weighed with those that it is intended to resemble. The best of heathens never attained to the high standard of Christian virtue, though they reached to the highest pinnacle in human estimation. When Cato was publicly seen drunk, one of his friends declared it would be easier to prove that drunkenness was no vice, than that Cato could be vicious.

" Why hast thou given us certain proof
To know adulterate gold, but stamp'd no mark
Where it is needed most — on man's base metal ? "

The Pharisees appear to have obeyed no God but public opinion, and no conscience but their own convenience, giving laws to others, but con-

sulting chiefly their own ease in observing them ; and thus it has been alleged of the Popish priests, who, in many ways, so much resemble them, that they often fast with wine and sweetmeats, while they enjoin others to fast with bread and water ; for, in the Roman Church, gluttony may be shrouded in a fast, and, on the contrary, at a feast, men, conscientiously temperate, may be hermits. All superstitious errors are an imitation of what is right ; and it certainly is well for Christians to make their lives, in so far, a continual fast, that they never shall eat more than tends to the wholesome nourishment of the body. But, as all things in this world have a tendency to excess, whether in feasting or in fasting, the well-intentioned must distinguish judiciously between murder and mortification. He who cultivates a favourite plant, and waters it every day with just enough to make it vigorous, would unnecessarily impair its health by withholding the needful refreshment for any length of time, and the nourishment we require for the body should occupy as little of our thoughts as possible.

He who lives the life of an epicure, sits down to his table like Esau, with all that he shall have for his birthright served up to him ; and surely his enjoyment of the greatest feast must be checked by recollecting the solemn reckoning that

is to follow on gluttony ; but he who fasts merely to gain the approbation of others, shall not only die the victim of Satan, but shall be fed, moreover, on bread and water till his execution. Yet we need not be so morbidly anxious as St. Boniface, who sent for advices from Rome to Germany as to what were the days on which he could be allowed to eat bacon.

Luther said respecting himself, “ If ever monk could obtain heaven by his monkish works, I should certainly have been entitled to it. Of this all the friars who have known me can testify. If it had continued much longer, I should have carried my mortification even to death, by means of my watchings, prayers, reading, and other labours.”

When the eloquent Narni preached at Rome, such was the effect of his oratory that, during the first Passion week afterwards, two thousand crowns’ worth of ropes were sold to make scourges with ! But, as Dr. South, in his own very peculiar style, remarks, “ Our Lord commands no man to be a skeleton or a walking ghost, or to throw away his health in order to his salvation, and thus to make his table-cloth his winding sheet. A catarrh, or a consumption, is no man’s duty, and God did not give us eyes merely that we may pluck them out.” Self-denial is right, but self-murder is a sin, and those who think that “ keep-

ing under the body" means extreme fasting, must suppose that the body cannot be kept under by virtuous principle. "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him?"

Paul was scourged and beaten by the Jews, but we never read that he scourged or beat himself; therefore we should listen to the voice of nature and reason, because the Holy Scriptures enjoin no duties contrary to them, though the Papists would have men blind their own eyes, that they may be guided, in the plainest injunctions of Scripture, by the eyes of other men, as fallible as themselves; and put out their own lamp in the dark, in order to stumble on in pursuit of the light carried by another.

Men are apt to fancy, that if they make a sacrifice, it must be right, whatever the sacrifice may be, and that the greater the sacrifice, the greater is the duty done; but, even in such voluntary self-denial, we are sure, unless we act in conformity to the Scriptural model, to go wrong. A man may resolve to make his religion consist in cutting the nose off his face, or in sitting all his life in the dark; but if there be no injunction to that effect in Scripture, where is his warrant for so useless though difficult a sacrifice?

Christians are not to refuse themselves bread, but they must give bread to the hungry ; not to wear sackcloth, but to clothe the naked ; and they must be fit to live in this world, performing their duties to society and mankind, before they are fit to leave this life for a better. The world is a great forest of thorns in the road to heaven, but we must go through it. A Christian's duty is not invention, but imitation ; for the sum of his life should be conformity to the example of Christ. The most difficult of all tests is to follow in the footsteps of our benevolent Saviour, who lived a perfect life under the most trying of all circumstances, under the observation and criticism of his intimate associates. That is the true evidence of worth, being weighed in the balance, where so many are found wanting. St. Augustine, when describing "the fathers of the desert," uses the strongest language of censure on their private habits, saying, "They pretend to fast, when they are so full as to be ready to burst. They pretend to renounce society, but are secretly visited in their cells by the most abandoned people. They come into Jerusalem on festival-days bare-foot and dripping with blood, from thorns purposely stuck in their flesh, clothed only in skins, with a girdle of bark, and tear their beards before the people who load them with presents, and then they go back, secretly rejoicing,

to the desert, and indulge themselves in all kinds of excesses."

The Bible does not enjoin Christians to live as angels, but as men ; and the true difficulty of principle is to render us esteemed by those who meet us in hourly companionship ; to command the temper through every trifling irritation ; to be truthful in the minutest narratives ; to be benevolent and forgiving to small offences, and to give every member of the domestic circle his due ; to be patient with the arrogant, and humble without becoming subservient to our superiors. These are efforts of principle, compared with making which many could easily live on a crust, or even without one.

A man's body is to be the habitation but not the dungeon of his soul, for piety enjoins no man to be dull or to maltreat his corporeal tenement ; and extremes which are not commanded by God should not be enjoined by men ; yet, as all mankind, without exception, are haunted in their secret minds by the spectre of death and judgment, all would lull such terrors to sleep, either by seeking the divine gift of faith, or by plunging desperately into worldly pursuits, or by a laborious and painful endeavour to perform some unheard-of austerities.

We read of Simon Stylites, or Simon of the Pillar, considered, during the fourth century,

the greatest Saint in all Palestine, who remained during twenty years on the summit of a pillar sixty feet high, because that station brought him nearer to Heaven, while crowds flocked to gaze upon the idle visionary, and even the Emperor Theodosius addressed a letter to him as "The Holy Martyr in the air." No doubt distance lent enchantment to the view, for he must have been in a shocking state of both mind and body, most unfit for the actualities of a Christian life; and good men would have been created to little purpose if they were all to lead such a life of abstracted do-nothing selfishness, without mutual love or mutual usefulness. As Lord Bacon so truly observes, "if a man be gracious and courteous to others, it shows he is a citizen of the world, and that his heart is no island cut off from other lands, but a continent that joins them." It is a very different thing to resist the temptations of life or to avoid them, and he who is accustomed to wrestle with difficulties will be much stronger than the man who never encountered any. This is exemplified in the case of children who have been educated entirely at home, and who seldom exhibit so much strength of principle or of talent as those who are early initiated into the struggle of life. The home-bred boy is accustomed to be acted for and thought for, therefore he is unused to a sense of responsibility,

while at once plunged into the greatest temptations of life, without being practised to combat the lesser temptations of childhood and youth. The boy educated in recluse and solitary ignorance of life, has the evil hour averted; but like an infant that is carried in arms long after it ought to have been walking, he will be much more apt to stumble, and the stumble will be more dangerous, when he begins those exertions of principle, to which he ought to have been early accustomed. And this is probably the reason for that mournful fact, that the sons of very pious parents most frequently begin life by disappointing the hopes of those who launch them into life, with every lesson taught them except experience; a lesson which all must learn sooner or later for themselves. The father who said he would rather his daughters should be praying nuns than weeping queens, never seems to have thought of a happy medium. But "it is not good for man to be alone;" and the child must practise for manhood, or be in many important respects a child still, when he ought to have attained maturity of mind as well as of body. He should be prepared, not to live in a cell or on a pillar, not to rupture all social ties and repress all natural impulses, but, like our Divine Master, to preserve the dignity and purity of the Christian character, in constant association with a circle of chosen friends, in diligent activity

among all he can serve, whether good or bad ; and, like our Lord, in social intercourse of sympathy and kindness, at the houses of those who desired to be honoured with His presence, whether at the funerals, the marriages, or the entertainments in their families. Occasional solitude is a sublime delight to high intellects, and to prolific minds, but to the majority, it is, when prolonged, mere vacuity of mind and of heart, ending generally in stupidity, and sometimes in absolute insanity. When Domitian shut himself up alone, it was merely to catch flies.

Men may attempt impossibilities, but they cannot perform them ; and though all can pray, as well as be devout, there are some who cannot fast or be in health without sleep and food ; therefore, it is no more incumbent on such persons to deny themselves nourishment, than it would be to lose sixty ounces of blood every morning ; yet the monks sometimes bled themselves to fainting for the love of Jesus. Christ is so considerate to the necessities and frailties of human nature, that the moment he raised a young person from the dead, he ordered her something to eat ; and it is a singular circumstance, that in lunatic asylums more than half the patients are persons desirous of starving themselves to death. The duty of fasting, therefore, though salutary in moderation, requires in its use, as a means of grace, great dis-

cernment to avoid a faulty extreme, and the strictest watchfulness against ostentation. It became well known once in Oxford, that a congregation of Independents appointed a fast to commence immediately after dinner; but if their dinner made them fitter for prayer, reflection, and works of benevolence than hungry men would have been, it was well bestowed, for God has given us a body as well as a soul of which to take care.

Few minds have ever stood the test of sudden prosperity, which is as dangerous to the soul as a full table to a starving man; an instance of which we see in the case of Gregory the Great, who died in 604, and was said to be the last of the good Popes, and the first of the bad. He would have made this world, if he could, one great monastery; but the worship he encouraged of the Saints, and of the Virgin Mary, was but a new form of Paganism, by setting aside our undivided adoration of that Divine and Holy Trinity, on a clear belief in which our everlasting salvation depends. Erasmus remarks, that if there be a saint more apocryphal than another—a St. George, St. Christopher, or St. Barbara,—many will honour these with greater fervency than St. Peter, St. Paul, or even than Christ himself; but we must in no degree, and in no way, give that glory to another, which belongs singly and alone to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Heathens have excelled all would-be saints in their self-inflicted privations; and it is impossible not in some degree to admire the wrong-headed conscientiousness which induced them to persevere in so stern an effort of principle, such as they conceived to be right. Those who canonised Thomas à Becket were pleased that he had worn a hair-shirt under his splendid robes, but when they discovered that it was crawling with vermin, their admiration greatly increased; yet heathens and barbarians have equalled him in such bodily penances. It is related in history of the Caliph Omar, that he preached to his subjects in a tattered cotton gown, torn in twelve places. A Persian satrap, who paid humble homage to the conqueror of his nation, found that powerful caliph lying asleep, among a multitude of beggars, on the steps of his own mosque at Medina, where his diet consisted of dates or coarse barley-bread dipped in salt. His drink was water; and sometimes, by way of additional penance, he ate his bread without salt, considered in the East a luxury indispensable even to the poorest mendicant; and we read of Virgil being so fond of salt, that he carried some always in his pocket, and used it incessantly, taking pinches from a box, as modern men in the present day enjoy carrying a box of tobacco.

^{Verse 5.} The Pharisees were all for show, and nothing for substance, in religion, and might be compared to those wild beasts which are only prized for their external coat and fine colouring. Respecting those duties which fall under the eye of man, none were so constant or more abundant; but in what remains between God and the unseen soul, within the retirement of their closets and the recesses of their hearts, these hypocrites excused themselves. Among the ancients it always excited the greatest consternation, when a sacrifice was found to have no heart; but what shall be said of the Christian worshipper who brings not his own heart to God? Those who act merely to be seen, cannot act to the purpose, as they merely smooth the outside of their behaviour, and conceal the snake under flowers; but a true Christian must pray till he loves to pray, and read his Bible till he delights to read it.

^{Verse 5.} Phylacteries were worn as amulets to defend the wearer from evil. They were scraps of parchment, wherein were inscribed, with great neatness, texts out of the law, which the Jews sewed up in leather and wore during prayers upon their foreheads and left arms, intimating that if we bear the things of God in our minds as carefully as if we had them bound between our eyes, they will shield us from harm. Such

talismans are worn now very commonly in Spain ; and Borrow gives, at full length, the very words written on one, in the efficacy of which the most implicit trust was placed by the wearer for safety, both to his soul and body.

God had directed the Jews to make borders or fringes to their garments, as a memorandum of their being a peculiar people ; but the Pharisees were not content to have these borders like those of their neighbours, which were quite sufficient to fulfil God's design, in appointing them to be worn as a sort of uniform, in token of their Master's service. The Pharisees, unlike that prince who wore sackcloth under his purple vest, must have their sackcloth outside, and their phylacteries larger than the regulation, to answer their own design of making themselves conspicuous ; though truly, in the secret cabinet of their own minds, they were mere hypocrites. Like peacocks in the sunshine, they ostentatiously paraded themselves before the world's eye, seeking admiration for that which was only external, and admiring themselves in their ignorance of what is truly great and good. In religion, as in learning, those of the profoundest acquirements are often least on their guard as to mere appearances ; and it is related of that eminent philosopher Samuel Clarke, who often indulged in robust exercise, that being once surprised, in the act of

leaping over a chair, by the entrance of a pedantic, superficial man, he exclaimed, "Now we must desist, for a fool is coming in!"

" What care I for lofty place,
If the Lord grant me his grace,
Showing me his gracious face,
And with joy I end my race !

" If I do love the things on high,
Doubtless them enjoy shall I ; —
Earthly pleasures if I try,
They when pursued the faster fly.

" To me grace, O Father, send,
On Thee wholly to depend,
That all may to thy glory tend ;
So let me live, so let me end."

*By ELIZABETH, Queen of Bohemia ;
died 1662.*

It is not having possession of the
Verse 6. uppermost seats that is here condemned, because, wherever a few persons are assembled, some one must be uppermost; but men are warned against the unduly valuing such a little piece of ceremony as sitting highest or going first, and should not feel resentment at its being withheld. In barbarous courts, the stress laid even in these times on such trifling etiquettes, may prove what is natural to man. We find that Sir John Malcolm, during his embassy in the East, had to use the utmost efforts of his great diplomatic skill to

obtain for himself the seat that was his due in the court of Persia. At the court of Prussia, once, a negotiation became prolonged during several days, whether the Margravine of Anspach should be permitted to sit on a chair with a back to it, or only on a stool, below the level of the royal platform; and even in our own country, and in our own times, the life-or-death struggle for precedence is little in accordance with our Divine Lord's character and doctrines. Short indeed, and insignificant are such earthly distinctions in a world where the robes of majesty and the rags of beggary are preludes alike to the shroud, and where those who have sat in the seat of the scornful must be laid in the grave beside those they have scorned.

“ There, servants, masters, small and great,
Partake the same repose;
And there, in peace, the ashes mix
Of those who once were foes.”

Verse 7. Greetings would not have pleased these Pharisees half as much, if they had not been bestowed in the public markets, where everybody might see how much they were respected, and how high they stood in the opinion of the people. No spectacle of public greeting is so magnificent in the whole world now, as that given to the Pope on St. Peter's day, when he pro-

nounces his benediction, from the windows of the Vatican, on the city of Rome. Thousands fall on their knees when the Pope, rolled forward on an arm-chair, appears ; and how unlike Peter himself, who walked to perform his duties unostentatiously among his brethren, redeemed like himself by the alone merits of Jesus Christ our Lord ! The best of teachers are but lights from Heaven in vessels of clay.

St. Paul rent his clothes with indignant vexation when the people of Syria attempted to pay him superhuman honours, and said, “ We are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God.”

“ If the Papists were not idolaters, the ancient Pagans were not,” observes Lady Mary Wortley Montague ; but there is a strange difficulty in preserving the reasonable medium pointed out in religion, for those who would rationally and amiably follow out its Divine precepts. Those who do not hold by the clearly expressed intention of Scripture, reel to and fro from one extreme to the other ; often, it is true, from a morbid anxiety to do better than well. A sect exists now in a provincial part of England, so literally observing the injunction to use no greetings, that they pass each other without any notice whatever. An excellent Christian, who had been particularly

kind to one of his old friends, observing him once in a public thoroughfare, and ignorant of his recently adopted tenets, expressed his cordial pleasure at this unexpected meeting; but after vainly endeavouring to obtain any answer, asked his friend if it were possible that he had so soon forgotten him. The enthusiast hurried past, merely saying, in reply, "Use no greetings."

It is remarkable that ambitious and assuming priests of all denominations have invariably shown a desire to be called "Father." The title denotes authority, pre-eminence, and a right to expect special respect; but in a spiritual sense the title belongs only to God, whom it is our highest honour and privilege thus to address. Christians must give the proper titles of civil office to magistrates and officials. Our parents also are to be reverently acknowledged in an ordinary sense; but they must acknowledge no man as having a dominion over their faith, to the extent of unlimited credence and implicit submission. A monk, named Arnoldi, used every day to offer up this simple prayer in his quiet cell, "O Lord Jesus! I believe that Thou alone art my redemption and my righteousness."

When the excellent George Herbert named the name of Christ, he constantly added, "My Master;" and the pious Robert Boyle invariably paused some moments before he ventured to utter

that holy name, which he did always with reverential awe. Thus the Christian, when in company, must regulate his tongue; in the domestic circle he must govern his temper; and when alone he must control his thoughts.

“Hear me, O God !
A broken heart
Is my best part :
Use still thy rod,
That I may prove
Therein thy love.

“If Thou hadst not
Been stern to me,
But left me free,
I had forgot
Myself and Thee.”

BEN JONSON.

Verse 11. It is easy to be humble in words; and who does not profess to be so! The Pope calls himself “Servant of the servants of God!” while he is, as an old divine expresses it, the very eye-sore of Heaven, usurping the authority of a despotic father, of an absolute master, and of our Lord himself; yet no sentence of Christ occurs so often as this assurance, which is ten times repeated in Scripture, that whoever shall exalt himself shall be abased, and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.” The humility among our associates enjoined by Scripture is not

that a man must be unconscious of his own gifts, or tell himself a falsehood on the subject; for it is no more intended that a talented man should think himself stupid, than that a tall man should think himself short; nor need any one gifted with beauty consider herself hideous, any more than a rich man should teach himself to believe he is poor. The true humility of religion consists in properly estimating the equal or superior merits of others. A man proud of his oratorical abilities undervalues his cotemporary distinguished for his knowledge of science. The nobleman who prides himself on his birth and rank, looks with contempt on the plebeian who has but newly acquired wealth; and the traveller who has intelligently explored extensive tracts of unknown continents, glances with arrogant contempt, perhaps, at the curate who has travelled as many actual miles in going from house to house within the limits of his own parish. Thus might each man consider others better in some respects than himself, by reflecting that in whatever he excels, his neighbour probably excels in something of equal or greater importance. As to the internal character, the best man knows more evil of himself than he can possibly know of his brother, and ought to fix his attention on that; for as every sin is like a blot of ink, soiling the whitest dress or the cleanest paper, the stain of his own sin should

chiefly occupy the Christian's attention and excite his regret. It is related of Bishop Latimer in his old age, that often he continued kneeling in fervent prayer till he became quite stiff, and unable to rise without assistance.

St. Basil compares those who describe ^{Verse 18.} religion without practising it, to artists who can paint very beautiful pictures, though they may be ugly themselves. They can represent humility in its true shape and colours, while they are themselves filled with vanity; they draw fascinating pictures of patience, while burning with anger at every provocation; and they can represent, in charming tints, modesty, calmness, and reflection, though constantly distracted by a thousand frivolous objects and pursuits. To counterfeit sanctity is, as St. Austin remarks, a double iniquity; but hypocrites like none to be better than themselves, and would pronounce a sentence of ostracism against all who are justly held in that estimation which they attempt by unfair means to attain. The Scribes and Pharisees, blinded by prejudice, and resolute to support their own worldly interest, would neither themselves receive Christ as Messiah, nor permit those who were disposed to welcome him. Thus they wickedly destroyed the souls of numbers; and our Lord here denounces eight woes against them, like so many claps of thunder from Mount Sinai.

This was Christ's best public discourse, containing a most impressive summary of all he had already said against hypocrites, the class of persons, above all others, that he always most deeply censured ; therefore this is one of the most appalling and awful addresses ever spoken to mortal man. It was pronounced by our best and truest friend ; yet never was there a more terrible warning, or a clearer development of sin and its penalties.

Nothing is a sadder sight among human beings, because so contrary to natural feeling, than to see an affectionate parent under a necessity severely to punish the fault of his own child ; and yet how much more high-toned and estimable is the love of such a father, than of one who with a mere animal love for the body, and not the soul, of his child, in careless self-indulgence allows the faults of his children to magnify, till their better qualities become overshadowed in everlasting night. A magistrate also may be in perfect charity with the prisoners whom he condemns to punishment ; and even the executioner feels no malice against the culprit whom he is commanded by the laws of human justice to punish : and thus we must look to ourselves, and not to our judge, for the cause of all we suffer from the just sentence of either God or man.

The woes pronounced here by Christ are remarkable not only because of the authority, but on

account of the gentleness of Him who denounced them; for does it not add greatly to the effect of a condemnation, if the judge himself be moved to emotion when pronouncing the sentence?

These eight woes are in stern contrast to the eight beatitudes in our Lord's Sermon on the Mount; and, Christ having come to bless man, who shall intercede if our only Intercessor feels bound to condemn? A woe from Christ our Saviour is indeed without remedy. As he who acts the part of a king upon the stage has no claim to a sceptre, no more can a hypocrite, who neither is nor would be what he personates, feel entitled to a reward for being in reality what he has appeared. Jesus Christ's declaring that their case is miserable makes it so; for while the hypocrite lives, his religion, however laborious, is vain. It is interesting and strange to read, in the letters of Blanco Whyte, what he suffered in a Spanish monastery, while plodding through all the external austerities and manual exercises of devotion, long after he had ceased to believe in their efficacy. The heartless drudgery he felt it to seem the thing he was not, while imprisoned within the walls of his cell, a captive in body and mind, without object and without hope, able to impose by his outward observances on every one but himself, proved to him unanswerably how happy are the Protestants, who

take for their guide the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible!

Each of these woes denounced against ^{Verse 13.} the Scribes and Pharisees had a reason annexed to it, containing a separate crime charged upon them. They endeavoured to keep men from believing in Christ, while thus making it their business to revive the ceremonial law now vanishing, to suppress the prophecies now accomplishing, and to implant in the people's minds inveterate prejudices against Christ and his doctrine.

The Pharisees, who liked to ride in triumph on the good opinion of all around, could not endure a religion which inculcated so much humility, so much self-denial, contempt of the world, and spiritual worship. The great and learned are to rise and shine in the world at the command of God, as he bids the sun shine not for itself, but for the general good of mankind; but these proud Pharisees, glorying in their own elevation, thought they had nothing to do but sun themselves in the consciousness of their own merits, and intended to enter Heaven with the confidence of purchasers entitled by their merits to dwell there, as well as perhaps, like the Roman Catholics, by works of supererogation, to gain admission for their less estimable friends. Can there be a more presumptuous insult offered to our Divine Saviour, than for any man to pretend he can intrude upon the office

which Christ took upon Himself, by conceiving that we can deserve a single blessing independently of His propitiation? Even if a man pays his whole debts, do his creditors thus become his debtors? The best action that the best of Christians ever performed let him not venture his salvation on, for only through the medium of our Saviour's merits can it be rendered acceptable, or even pardoned.

An excellent prelate, when expiring, with beautiful humility exclaimed, "How many Pagans would have been better than I, if God had raised them to the Church! How much worse than they are, should I have been, had I been a Pagan!" The Pharisees, on the contrary, delighted to extol and justify themselves; consequently repentance was not the door of admission by which they ever wished to enter. Their sins, however, got the better often of their hypocrisy, and betrayed them to the world's eye as they deserved.

It is wrong to keep away from Christ ourselves, but, if possible, worse to keep others from conversion; and the Pharisees, not conforming to Christianity, hindered many; like those idle persons who stand in the doorway of a church, and block it up, when others wish to crowd in. When Baron B—— died, it was well observed respecting him, "If he died a Christian, so much the better for himself; but if he had lived a Christian, it would

have been so much the better for many other people."

Some philosophers desire knowledge, ^{Verse 14.} not that they may know, but that they may become known, as the Pharisees desired to appear, rather than to be, religious. By such pretensions to extraordinary piety, the Pharisees insinuated themselves into general confidence, and probably induced unguarded persons, when dying, to appoint them trustees for their widows and children, who consequently became defrauded, while these pretended saints, to avoid suspicion, made religion and long prayers a cloak for this enormous oppression. There are Pharisees in the present day, for human nature itself is Pharisaical; and many would like no Gospel but that of Cardinal Palavicini, which declared that the main design of Christianity was to make men as rich, as great, and as happy as they can be in this world. Within a very recent period, one of the most fraudulent of bankruptcies, involving hundreds in ruin, was occasioned by the double-dealing and chicanery of one, who not only made long Pharisaical prayers in the presence of others over every meal, or even if he ate a single biscuit in the forenoon, but also publicly asked a blessing whenever he sat down at his desk to transact business. Very different was the quiet, unobtrusive piety of that exemplary clergyman Erskine,

a cotemporary of Blair, who spent his life in private prayer and benevolent actions ; but refused to accept a large estate bequeathed to him, because he thought others had a better right to the property, and that the reasons for which they had been disinherited were inadequate.

Many clergymen, like Erskine, give away not only much that they might honestly receive, but also their whole professional and private income, to do good ; and, unlike the Pharisees, act so liberally by the widows and children of the neighbourhood, that their own are very often left at last almost in the penury from which others were so benevolently relieved.

No man reaches Heaven who does not send his heart there before him ; but it is too sadly the case that in worldly things we act, while in religion we only talk ; that Heaven has our praise, but the earth our affections ; but the consistent example of a good Christian carries the weight it deserves, and becomes influential on all who hear of disinterested and persevering excellence. The most eloquent discourse not seconded by example must go to the winds ; and, as an old divine remarks, “ A blacksmith might as well attempt to model iron by using only a pair of bellows, as a preacher to turn the hearts of his congregation by the mere force of his lungs, unless they know that he lives as he teaches.” Sutton, who founded the Charter House, frequently retired to pray in his garden privately,

and was heard once earnestly making this important petition, "Lord ! thou hast given me a large estate ; give me therefore a heart to make use of it ! "

A recently deceased and most venerable clergyman used, in the fervour of his solitary devotions, frequently to pray aloud. On the night of his death he had retired in apparent health, and was seen by some of his friends walking alone in the garden, while his deep and serious voice became audible, addressing that Divine Master before whom a few hours afterwards he was unexpectedly summoned to appear. His voice, which had once enchain'd the earnest attention of thousands, was heard for the last time thus in solitary communion with his Maker, and in the morning he was found asleep in Jesus ; yet so gentle had been the transit from earth to Heaven, that a roll of paper, which he still held in his hand, had not even been crushed !

" What is this absorbs me quite ?
Steals my senses, shuts my sight,
Drowns my spirit, draws my breath ;
Tell me, my soul, can this be death ?
The world recedes — it disappears !
Heaven opens on my eyes ! — my ears
With sounds seraphic ring ;
Lend, lend your wings ! I mount ! I fly !
O grave ! where is thy victory ?
O death ! where is thy sting ? "

CHAP. III.

“ Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destin’d end or way,
But to act that each to-morrow
Find us further than to-day.”

LONGFELLOW.

WHEN Oliver Cromwell appeared before a numerous meeting of clergymen in Edinburgh, he harangued them for nearly an hour with a strange, unintelligible rhodomontade, interlarded with quotations from Scripture, intended to give them a prodigious impression of his learning and importance ; but they looked at each other in silent and bewildered amazement, until at length Mr. Semple, an old minister, rose up, saying, “ Moderator ! I hardly know what *the gentleman* would be at in this long discourse ; but one thing I am sure of, that he was perverting the Scripture ! ” To how many plausible sermons and speeches since those days, down to the present time, might those words be justly applied ! All ordinances are the appointed galleries of intercourse between God and His people ; but we must use them with prayerful circumspection, that we be not misled by ourselves or others into misusing or misunderstanding them.

Some Jewish writers mention that the
^{Verse 14.} Pharisees spent three hours at a time in the formalities of meditation and prayer, which they repeated thrice every day. These long prayers were probably not extemporary, but rather stated forms of words, which they repeated by rote, as the Papists drop their beads. Christ does not entirely condemn long prayers, for he himself continued a whole night in prayer; and human beings have so many sins to confess, so many wants to supply, and so many mercies to be grateful for, that their prayers may well be long. The Pharisees made a public trade of devotion, endeavouring to be thought favourites of Heaven; as we see, in the present day, persons of vulgar mind anxious to appear intimate where they are scarcely acquainted, and but very little esteemed. It is a strange infatuation in many who take as much trouble to seem, as it would cost them really to be, estimable; and, even in respect to the more insignificant gifts of wealth or happiness, men are often as anxious to excite envy by appearing to possess them as really to do so.

“ Oh ! scene of fortune which dost fair appear
Only to men that stand not near ! ”

The famous Frances Howard, Duchess of Richmond, used to wish by every cheap ostentation to raise admiration and reverence for her own import-

ance; and it is a well known fact in history, that she frequently caused a magnificent table to be exhibited, when she dined alone, covered with splendid silver dishes, which seemed to contain the choicest viands, but, after the deceived spectators had admired and departed, she sat down to the most frugal repast. Thus men act a lie sometimes when they would not speak one, and like to dazzle the eyes of others by their prosperity, or by their good qualities, caring less to possess them than to appear to do so; for, as Juvenal says, "The ridicule attached to poverty is worse than its privations."

By strict external observances the Pharisees convinced the Jews that such prayerful men could never desire to cheat them; therefore, happy the widow who could appoint a Pharisee to act as trustee to herself, and guardian to her children!

Genuine religion is not, like a mere piece of ornamental furniture, for show more than for use, but it is to be in daily and hourly employment. A true Christian, in his prayers, wishes not to be seen on earth, but to be heard in Heaven; while, on the contrary, the Pharisees appeared as if soaring heavenward on the wings of prayer and praise, though all the while their eyes were fixed, like those of the kite, towards their prey on the earth. The name of God was in their mouths, but the world had possession of their hearts. They allowed a furnace of worldly passions to burn

within, provided it did not become visible; and, in fact, prayer may be, when offered in the sight of man, a mere despicable service of the life, a mere profession of godliness, a mere livelihood, a mere proselytism, a mere zeal for party, not for God.

Popish priests, under pretext of long prayers for the dead, including dirges and masses, enrich themselves by devouring the provision made for the widows and fatherless. Who, that mourns a dead husband or parent, would not willingly sacrifice every earthly possession, if his heart-broken affection might yet in any way or degree reach those whom he laments, with some benefit? The knowledge that this cannot be, that death closes the account, and that nothing can improve or aggravate the condition of those who are gone, should give added urgency to the prayers and efforts of enlightened Protestants, that their living relatives may never hereafter have cause for that dismal exclamation, “No man hath cared for my soul !”

The mere pleasure of excitement,
Verse 15. though but raising a bubble, or pursuing the wind, is often a sufficient motive to exertion, and reward for it. A man will travel far to observe the summit of mountains, the waters of ocean, the rising course of a river, and the depth of a mine; but he neglects the most difficult of all studies,—the knowledge of himself, and the attempt

to direct others in a similar investigation. The making of proselytes, if it be to the truth, is a work worthy of the utmost labour; and such is the infinite value of souls, that nothing must be thought too great an effort to save one soul from death. One soul outweighs in value, and shall survive, the whole material universe; as St. Augustine remarks, "One single fly excels the sun, because it has life." The industry of these Pharisees, though from the unworthy motive of seeking proselytes to themselves, not to God, is a contrast to the negligence of many, who from better principles ought to act better, but are at no pains to save a soul from the state of endless repentance awaiting the unconverted. If a year could be reckoned for every drop of rain which has fallen since the world began, and for every leaf that has bloomed and faded since the creation, it seems a long period; yet, in comparison of that eternity in which we are hereafter to exist, it would be short, as well as insignificant; therefore, how justly did the ancient martyr weigh the comparative worth of soul and body, when he gave himself up to the executioner, saying, "My emperor threatens me with a prison, but God threatens me with hell."

" —— All our ill
May, if directed well, find happy end."

Worldly hearts shrink from no pains necessary to carry on their worldly purposes ; and the Pharisees made proselytes to strengthen their party, whom they worked up to such an extreme of furious bigotry and enmity against Christ, that they became fit for the most desperate services. Very black indeed does a chimney become when the fire below is constantly stirred into a flame ; and these much-excited converts of the Pharisees were even urged on sometimes to such actions as their teachers themselves declined. Perverted proselytes become always the greatest bigots ; the scholars outdo their masters ; and the most bitter enemies whom the Apostles in all places had to encounter were the Hellenist Jews, who had been mostly proselytes.

It proves a universal sense of religion
Verse 16. throughout the world, that oaths have been by all nations counted sacred ; nevertheless the Pharisees, more anxious for their own gain than for God's glory, put the people upon coining unwarrantable distinctions, as if it were a less crime to swear by the Temple itself than by the gold of the Temple, which acquired its whole sanctity by being laid on that altar.

It is recorded of Louis IX. by Joinville, after living with him during two and twenty years, that never once, even under the greatest provocation, did that pious monarch take the

name of God in vain ; and a regulation was laid down in Joinville's own house, that whoever swore should be punished by a blow.

There were some oaths that, according to the Jews, did not bind a man to assert the truth, or to perform a promise ; though that doctrine cannot be from the God of truth, if it give countenance to a breach of faith in any case whatever. Even engagements that ought not to have been made, are notwithstanding, when made, unless contrary to God's law, binding ; and Christ will not countenance the evasion of an oath, however plausible the pretext.

It was formerly very difficult to teach Highlanders the nature of an oath ; and as to a promise made in writing, the ignorant mountaineers held it in utter contempt. A lawyer who had become aware of this peculiarity, seeing some Celtic witnesses against his cause, ready to sign anything or to swear anything, at length declared that he should be quite satisfied if they would pass their word of honour, as gentlemen, that all they said was true ; upon which every one started back in consternation, and declined this pledge, which they considered much the more solemn, and declared, with an angry exclamation, that such a promise would oblige them to keep it.

Every artful contrivance to impair the sanctity of truth is equally sinful ; for it is a true remark

of falsehood, as the Stoics said of every sin, that if you are steeped in water up to the lips, you are as much drowned as if you were a mile over-head. When Cleomenes concluded a truce for seven days, and then massacred his enemy during the night, alleging that the nights were not included in his agreement, the cruel and crafty deception was, in actual fact, a falsehood : every evasion is equally a lie if intended to make others believe the thing that is not. As each bad action any one commits inclines him to do another, this is especially the case with lying ; therefore, when others seem even morbidly sensitive about truth, we should remember the opinion of Dr. Johnson, that it is impossible to inculcate too much accuracy ; for if a child said that anything occurred in one window when it occurred in another, he should be corrected. The least difficulties or scruples in a tender conscience must not be roughly treated, for they are like a knot in a thread which it requires a gentle hand to loosen without breaking. A man could no more hide himself from the knowledge of God, than he could hide himself from His presence ; but there is a practical atheism in most men which makes them forget this. The hardened sinner who said he did not mind telling a falsehood, though it hurt his conscience to be found out, spoke a great truth in human nature,— that our secret sins appear to us in a very different

light when seen with the eyes of other men ; and the light which shall disclose them no man can keep off, any more than he could hinder the opening day from shining in every dark place. What, then, shall be the shame and misery of our guilty souls, when before men and angels the greatest secret of our hearts is made public ! If disgrace be thrown upon any one in company, it is greatly aggravated, and becomes multiplied according to the number of witnesses, especially if they be estimable persons. A lie detected before those incapable of falsehood, or even a mere imprudence before the prudent, is deeply agonising ; but what would it be before the whole assembled world ! The Pharisees professed to be so morbidly conscientious, that they paid tithe of mere garden herbs ; but to be thus ostentatiously exact in trifles, and devoid of conscience in matters of importance, was egregiously absurd ; yet their varied excuses for doing as they pleased, brings to mind one of Franklin's quaint old sayings, " How convenient it proves to be a rational animal, who knows how to find or invent a plausible pretext for whatever it has a desire to do ! " If we look to the future through the medium of our own passions and inclinations, it is like holding up a telescope with a shaking hand to our eye, which cannot thus be made distinctly to discern what is at a distance.

Verse 23. The Jews were obliged to give a tenth of their property to support the Levites, and another tenth they paid for the service of the sanctuary, commonly in cattle or grain. Besides these, every third year they had to bestow another tenth on the poor, to be eaten in their own dwellings; so that nearly one-third of a Jewish income was devoted to religion, besides voluntary offerings.

It would be well if Christians distributed in the same proportion, not merely by an incidental giving of alms occasionally, but by that systematic habit of doing good which alone constitutes benevolence. Here we learn that all, in their places, should contribute to the support of a standing ministry; therefore Christ declares that it must not be left undone; for it is obvious that, without combination and agreement, the great national blessing of an Established Church cannot be enjoyed. In America it was till lately the law, that every man must contribute his quota to the maintenance of religion, but of what form and doctrines was left to the discretion of each individual; therefore every preacher who could gather a congregation, became his own bishop or presbytery: but such a plan could no more work well, than a regiment, without its standard and officers, fighting with each other, instead of opposing the common enemy by a general and united system.

All God's law it is important to obey; but chiefly that which testifies inward holiness, self-denial, contempt of the world, and resignation, in which lies the life of religion, as well as the very soul of happiness. Our minds are, however, helpless to purify, even with our tears, the depraved heart inflicted by nature, unless the Spirit of God move upon the face of those waters, bringing order into the chaos and confusion which reign there; and we must be energetically diligent in the great business of life, because truly what Hippocrates said respecting the cure of the body is much truer of the cure of the soul, that "Life is short, and art long."

We are neither permanently the better for pleasure, nor permanently the worse for sorrow, when they are passed away; but sin and guilt remain as fresh on the soul as ever to eternity; and actual crimes are but the visible eruptions of that evil nature for which an unrenewed man is to be condemned.

The Pharisees were blind guides,
Verse 24. avoiding lesser sins, to which there was little inducement, but eating the very apple of temptation by committing greater. They were, as an old divine says, "Great gnat-strainers and camel-swallowers, while the Pharisaical mantle of superstitious austerity was made long to cover a cloven foot." In more modern history we read of

Louis XI., who would with less scruple have put many innocent persons to death than he would have felt in breaking his fast upon Friday. In a somewhat similar spirit, the Pharisees would not enter the judgment hall for fear of being defiled, but stood at the door to cry out against the Holy Jesus; and when they gave Judas the price of innocent blood, they nevertheless scrupled afterwards to replace his returned money into the treasury. This was indeed swallowing the largest of camels, whatever suited their interest or convenience; but carefully straining out what it suited them to dispense with. The gnat has its origin in stagnant pools, and, having a sharp sting, would be carefully taken out by those about to refresh themselves; and hence the origin of the Jewish proverb to which our Saviour alluded, which somewhat resembles one commonly used in Arabia, "He eats an elephant, and is choked by a gnat."

The Christian is really what he is in-
Verse 25. wardly; for it is vain indeed to wash only the outside of a cup, because that shall be looked at, and to leave the inside soiled that shall be used. While the Pharisees appeared thus externally exact, they were, within the recesses of their own hearts, and in the close retirement of their own lives, full of intemperance and injustice. Wealth, or even reputation, may be taken away; but conscience is the only sure repository for a

man to lodge his treasure in, and the chest of his own heart can never be forced open ; therefore let that be, like a merchant's treasure, the last thing he throws overboard in a storm. A blind watchman would obviously be useless, and equally so a blind conscience. In Christ's estimation, those
Verse 26. are blind who, however quick in other things, are ignorant of the secret sin that lodges in their own hearts. The conscience, like the eye, is apt to examine everything except itself ; while, on the contrary, Christians are each bound to cleanse their own hearts from wickedness, not merely by casting a few scattered thoughts on religion, when they have nothing else to do, or during occasional periods of grief, or putting on religion once a week as a sort of Sunday dress, but it must be worn continually, while duty should be done simply and purely from the love of duty. Certainly the main business of a Christian lies within himself, because he has to cleanse that which is within, but not that only : if due care be taken of the interior, the exterior will also become pure, while the Christian character cannot but become so both in conduct and conversation, acting well ourselves, and speaking well of others. How true was that saying of the Jews, that a slanderer's tongue kills three,—the man who speaks, the man who listens, and the man of whom a story is told ; and it is alleged that the only pleasure of

which men never tire is finding fault with others ; yet there are occasions when it becomes an indispensable duty, and then, if it must be done, let it be done well, with humility, kindness, and discretion. On this subject Pope Clement XIV. gave his cardinals very judicious advice : " Speak nobly of religion, but let it be well-timed, for people avoid those who are perpetually preaching." There is no such infallible mark of friendship as a good-natured candour in telling a man when he is wrong ; and a self-interested flatterer, who consults his own ease and advantage, is an enemy compared to him who kindly and judiciously speaks out an unpleasant truth, at the hazard even of losing the friend he wishes so much to serve. It was well said, that a flatterer treats a vain man as the Philistines did Samson,—first putting his eyes out, and then mocking him.

One of the best instances on record where high principle and good feeling were testified in administering to a superior that grating and unpleasing thing, a wholesome truth, was given by Bishop Juxon.—When Charles I. was induced for once, and once only, to act against his own better feelings, in giving way before the popular tumult, and submitting to the death of his faithful friend, the great Lord Strafford, the exemplary prelate, with a firm adherence to his own duty, not only as a minister, but as a privy councillor, demanded an

audience of his royal master, and spoke out with the earnestness and dignity of one who knew his duty to his king as well as to his God: "You know, sir," he said, "the judgment of your own conscience. I beseech you follow that, and trust God with the rest!" Unfortunately for himself, the king abandoned the Bishop of London's advice, merely contenting himself with writing a beautiful and most affecting letter, which few could read without tears, in which he begged Lord Strafford's life; yet he spoiled all by putting a postscript at the end, saying, "If he must die, let it at least be delayed till Wednesday." In the last penitential meditations of King Charles, before he suffered himself, he remarks that Bishop Juxon, who alone advised him, contrary to popular clamour, to obey his conscience, was the man of all others most spared and respected by the people. It is pleasing to recollect that this conscientious prelate survived to be Archbishop of Canterbury, and he who so faithfully advised King Charles I. lived to replace the crown on the head of his unexpectedly restored son; leaving to subsequent generations an example of one who acted always as diligently, courageously, and yet circumspectly in his calling, as if there were no Providence to assist him, and yet, when all was done that he could do, trusting as implicitly in God as if he had done nothing; and Bishop Juxon might have said of himself, as truly

as John Knox did, “ I am not a man of law, that has my tongue to sell for silver or favour of the world.”

Christ here alludes to the Jewish custom of annually whitening any tombs that were situated in unusual places, that travellers might avoid them, because of the ceremonial pollution contracted by the touch of a grave; therefore the overseers of highways charged a small sum for repairing the white paint when decayed. How many, like the Pharisees, assent to the truth of Scripture, and use it to paint their faces but not to purify their hearts, being like dead bodies dressed up for mere show in splendid habiliments, or like sepulchres, not habitations of living feelings, but of unseen corruptions! When all other graves shall be opened, these whitened sepulchres shall be looked into, and all the pollution festering there become revealed before the whole host of Heaven. (Jer. viii. 1.)

It would be no comfort to a hypocrite in hell, that he had gone there creditably and plausibly, surrounded to the last hour by the respect of a credulous and deluded neighbourhood, imposed upon by his glorious pretences, and believing him all he wished to appear. Such a man resembles a lamp, with oil in the wick but none in the reservoir,—a person with money displayed in his hand, but none in his pocket, making a great external

show, while, in mournful truth, he had been throughout life a mere self-sufficient outlaw from all the blessings of the Covenant.

“ On charitable lists — those trumps which told
The public ear who had in secret done
The poor’ a benefit, and half the alms
They told of, took themselves to keep them sounding —
He blaz’d his name, more pleas’d to have it there
Than in the book of life ! ”

POLLOK.

CHAP. IV.

“ He whose mind
Is virtuous, is alone of noble kind ;
Though poor in fortune, of celestial race ;
And he commits the crime who calls him base.”

DRYDEN.

MATT. xxiii. 1.

IT is a sad sign of the present times, and of the disastrous influence on English morals of a foreign residence, that within these few months, among other political clubs established in Paris, one consists entirely of women, whose creed, too atrocious for description, outdoes that of Mary Wollstencroft ; and it is well known that Englishwomen of rank and high position have gone habitually to hear the discussion of doctrines which the most profligate men would abjure.

The pious peasants of former ages used sometimes to have a prodigious eye painted on the ceiling of their cottages, as a memorial of God’s presence, whom it was their simple study to obey ; neither adding to, nor taking from, His holy law. In the mere affairs of this life, as much evil is often done by too much zeal as by too little : and men, like these Pharisees, who encumber the worship of God by their own inventions, prefer

human traditions generally to the unquestioning and implicit obedience which Scripture duty demands. A thorough-going Roman Catholic, preferring tradition to Scripture, will consider the Friday, which he appoints himself to be kept holy, as requiring more sacred reverence than the Sabbath, which God has ordained; and instead of praying, as commanded, to his listening Saviour, prefers a mythology of his own, by addressing those saints of human origin, born like ourselves in original sin, who are no more to be worshipped by Christians than Diana of the Ephesians.

Most persons in authority know that the best servants or soldiers are those who obey literally, without adding to, any more than taking from, the line of duty prescribed. The greatest military commander of the present age was known always to put under arrest any officer who exceeded his commission, even when done with the bravest and best intentions; and the Christian's business in life is, to ascertain the will of God, but not to exaggerate those commands which are adapted by his Creator to the powers of man, and to his best interests. A self-willed obedience is often in its character and effects very like a self-willed disobedience.

Some officers were once disputing which was the best soldier in their regiment; when a great commander said, that the best he had ever seen

was in a certain battle once, on the following occasion:—the soldier's sword had been already lifted to strike a prostrate enemy; but at that moment a retreat was sounded, and with instant, unhesitating obedience, he drew back, dropped the point of his sword, and obeyed the call.

During the reign of George II. a subordinate officer led on his regiment to engage the enemy, contrary to orders from his commander-in-chief, who saw an absolute necessity for the army retreating; but when a warrant was afterwards presented to his Majesty for signature, in which the headstrong subordinate was awarded the punishment due to his offence, nothing could persuade the King to sign it, and he repeatedly threw away the pen, saying, “No! no! he fought,—the other ran away!” The running away was however at that time a duty; and if every separate individual is to obey or disobey God and man at his own discretion, listening only to the impulse of even the best intentions, all must soon fall into anarchy and confusion, for truly “to obey is better than sacrifice.”

The dispensations of Providence may be compared to a piece of tapestry, including a thousand shreds, all in apparent confusion till arranged together. The whole shall be understood by mankind when completed, and then a beautiful history shall become obviously displayed to the

eye. It is well that God should be not only the giver, but the chooser, of our lot ; for truly we may say, as Luther said to Melancthon, when the mind of his friend was over anxious about the future : “Leave off to govern the world, and to raise models of state in your little discontented closets ; let infinite wisdom, power, and love alone !”

It is a great blessing to mankind that God has concealed coming events ; but we ourselves defeat the merciful intention of His doing so, by disquieting ourselves with fears and guesses hurried in advance of what the past and present have unfolded of our personal history,—as Jacob wept over the torn coat of Joseph, while his beloved son was yet alive. How many sorrows that never came have we suffered by anticipation ! and prayed, perhaps, to be spared from those which turned out for the best : but the wheel goes on, whatever may be done by the fly to impede its progress.

A pious Christian lady, mother of a numerous family, used frequently, during old age, to tell her surviving children, that once only did she remember to have prayed, with agonised anxiety, to have a threatened misfortune averted from her, without making the usual reservation that the circumstances should be as God saw best for her good and His own glory. This was during the illness of a lovely infant, the restoration of whom to life she fervently implored with all the de-

voted earnestness of maternal affection ; and the child did soon recover, but only to be hopelessly an idiot ; and during the years that it survived —to the age of eighteen—that mother's care was beautiful to behold ; yet she always afterwards held herself up as a warning, to those whom she loved, never to encourage a wish or form a plan without distinctly referring it to the superior wisdom and undoubted goodness of God. To be deprived of worldly blessings is not a loss sometimes, but an escape ; and God is able to correct our prayers, as we ask often what would be our destruction. We beg heartily for what would be our ruin ; to avoid the heat we take refuge in the fire, and implore God for what would in fact destroy us ; but the submissive Christian receives bread in truth when he asks for a stone, and a fish when he asks for a serpent. How many have been ruined by that very rain or sunshine for which others have heartily prayed !

“ Still raise for good the supplicating voice,
But leave to Heaven the measure and the choice ;
Safe in His mind, whose eye discerns afar
The secret ambush of a specious prayer.”

JOHNSON.

Verse 29. The Pharisees built the tombs of the prophets, as our Lord in this verse remarks ; but that was all, as they neither observed

their sayings, nor imitated their actions. They hypocritically pretended great kindness for the memory of those prophets who were dead and gone, while they hated and persecuted those who were present with them. This our Lord mentions last as being the blackest part of the Pharisees' character. In the same spirit, worldly men can easily honour the memory of any faithful minister departed this life, because he can neither reprove nor disturb them in their sins. The writings of deceased prophets told the Pharisees what they should be ; but the reproofs of living prophets told them what they really were, which such hypocrites could not endure to hear.

These Pharisees protested loudly
Verse 30. against the murder of prophets in ancient days, yet were they now plotting to murder Christ, to whom all their former prophets bore witness. Thus the deceitfulness of a sinner's own heart appears in this, that he floats down the stream of guilt in his own day, and yet fancies he should have been certainly able to swim against the torrent which carried down others ; believing that if he had himself enjoyed other people's advantages, he would have improved them more faithfully ; or if he had encountered other people's temptations, he would have resisted more vigorously, and shut the door effectually upon every wicked thought.

In these thirty verses of this chapter we read a complete sketch of what still commonly passes current in the world for genuine religion,— the outward aspect by which hypocrites keep themselves and others from salvation. Mere mechanical punctuality in prayer; active zeal to make proselytes for whatever opinions we hold; a superstitious reverence for consecrated places or things, without any for Him to whom they are consecrated; a scrupulous exactness in little observances, though with the neglect of justice, mercy, and faith; cautiousness to purify the outward conduct, without much regard to inward rectitude; and a professed veneration generally for all good men, except those among whom we happen to live;— these are the characteristics of counterfeit piety. These are all mere exhalations; and yet, like comets that seem for a time to outshine the fixed stars, such imitations of Christianity appear for a time to eclipse what is genuine. “Certainly,” as Lord Bacon remarks, “it is Heaven upon earth to have a man’s mind move in charity, rest in Providence, and turn upon the poles of truth.”

The Pharisees were by nature, as Verse 31. much as by descent, the children of those who had killed the prophets; and Christ knew that they were moreover contriving his own death. In allusion to this, he tells them to fill up the

measure of their guilt, which will at last be overflowed by a deluge of wrath. If men will obstinately run headlong to ruin, the reins are thrown on their neck, and that is then the saddest condition a man can be in on this side of hell: yet the punishing of sinners is an unwelcome task for Him who came to save.

“Oh ! Thou who dry’st the mourner’s tear,
How dark this world would be,
If, when deceiv’d and wounded here,
We could not fly to Thee !

“The friends who in our sunshine live,
When winter comes are flown ;
And he who has but tears to give
Must weep those tears alone.

“But Thou wilt heal the broken heart,
Which, like the plants that throw
Their fragrance from the wounded part,
Breathes sweetness out of woe.”

MOORE.

Zacharias, mentioned in this passage,
Verse 32—35. was the last of the martyrs of the synagogue; and we read here the sternest language ever used by our Saviour to man. Our Divine Master then saw in all around him “that hideous sight, a naked human heart ;” therefore, how much should we admire and wonder at His patience and long forbearance both then and ever since ! Christ

knew the Pharisees thoroughly as a generation subtle and malicious as serpents; how then could they escape condemnation who, though on the high road to Hell, felt proudly confident that they were advancing meritoriously to Heaven? With what dignity and power the Divine Saviour reproves them, in a strain of eloquence beyond the reach of mere human oratory; and how soon are their vain pretences thus extinguished, like a torch before a tempest, leaving them in everlasting night!

The change here is beautiful,—to ^{Verse 37.} relenting tenderness and sorrow,—when our Redeemer, the great Physician, as well as the Saviour of souls, now announces the hopeless ruin which Jerusalem had brought upon herself, without any allusion to the sufferings which He was himself so soon to undergo. The most flowing rhetoric of language would be cold and flat, in comparison of this apostrophe! Nothing ever issued from the tongue or heart of man more pathetic or more endearing; and if Christ wept with such intense compassion for the calamities which Jerusalem was to undergo, how much more reason has every human being to weep that He endured so much for us!

The present dispersion as well as the continued unbelief of the Jews, and their ultimate conversion, are here evidently predicted; and with this very

solemn, prophetical warning, our Lord closed his public ministry, and finally left the Temple.

“Even so shall perish,
In its own ashes, a more glorious Temple,
Yea, God’s own architecture, this vast world,
This fated universe — the same destroyer,
The same destruction — earth, earth, earth, behold !
And in that judgment look upon thine own.”

Their house, of which the Jews had been so proud, was left desolate; and the repetition used by our Lord is touchingly emphatic: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!” testifying the deepest commiseration. Our blessed Saviour not only bled and died to redeem sinners, but he wept over those that were lost. It is a solemn consideration when we perceive the goodness and severity of our Lord; for here we see that the sinners of Jerusalem were wept over, and yet abandoned to ruin. There is for all mankind only a limited day of pardon; and let each human being beware, lest slighted mercy retire, and vengeance take its turn. This touching apostrophe of our Lord to the Jews, has been beautifully paraphrased in these words: “My blood ye have despised—my tears ye shall have—that would have saved you,—these can only lament over your hopeless destruction.”

Since that memorable day of our Lord’s entrance into Jerusalem, how many valiant swords have

been drawn in vain to rescue it from infidel bondage! What hosts of noble, enthusiastic crusaders have sacrificed the happiness as well as the affections of home, to bleed and die in honour of that Divine Saviour who was here about to die now in anticipation of their sins and of their penitence! Where, on the surface of the visible earth, is there a spot so dear to history, and to all the deepest feelings of the human race, as Jerusalem! yet, no region is half so disfigured now by the bad taste and the perverted creeds of sinful man,—so often ingeniously wrong, both in what he does and in what he thinks.

“ O Salem! who, in proud disdain,
My faithful prophets slew ;
And soon, the cup of guilt to drain,
Wilt slay thy Saviour too !

“ Now shall thy house be desolate,
Thy glory now shall close ;
Nor leave one trace of ruin'd state
To tell where Salem rose.”

DALE.

CHAP. V.

“But the gods of the pagan shall never profane
The shrine where Jehovah disdain’d not to reign,
And scatter’d and scorn’d as Thy people may be,
Our worship, oh Father ! is only for Thee.”

BYRON’s *Hebrew Melodies*.

MEN of high principle and refined feelings have no more sympathy by nature with ignorant and abandoned sinners, than the dove, that feeds on grain, can have with the raven, that prowls on carrion ; but the vocation of Christians should be, —commiseration for even the worst of criminals. We perceive that our Lord’s whole life was devoted to teaching repentance : how astonishing, therefore, is the carelessness of many, who profess to be his followers, respecting the great interest and duty of rescuing others from that gulf of ignorance which leads to vice, and which, were it to increase among mankind, would end in the subversion of all order and good government ! An aged malefactor, who had been taught no sense of religion, once declared at the last, when about to suffer for a thousand crimes on the gallows, that he had enjoyed some things in life, and that, compared to fifty years’ liberty in a career of lawless dissi-

pation, he did not mind the half hour's suffering by which it was now to be ended; and he added, that a man would deserve worse than the death he was about to suffer, who did not say the same. Surely society should, in self-defence, provide against the increase of such characters by a moral and religious education given to all; and although it is said that there never is, nor can be, a happy villain, yet those who have no belief or consciousness of the terrors which await a sinner in another life, might naturally think like this unfortunate criminal, and adopt his language; for in such a case, perhaps, sinners abandoned to ignorance would never become repentant. Sin and shame are joined together by the irreversible sentence of God, therefore let no man put them asunder; but any one who is dead to shame has lost the strongest defence against temptation. As a blush is considered the colouring of virtue, so those who have any virtuous sensibility remaining must feel that the worst punishment in this life is to be covered with infamy, when every eye that looks upon him inflicts a wound; and he knows that a good name, once dead, has in this world no resurrection. No criminal is likely to confess or to be penitent before his execution, except for the fear of a judgment to come, not only suggested to him by instinctive conscience, but by pious instructors. As the bee labours busily all day, and

tries every weed, as well as every flower, to extract honey, but never stings except under great provocation, so the rulers of a country and the ministers of God must exert themselves to bring out in all people whatever good they can, and to keep them from evil, cultivating in their minds that fear of shame which becomes, in a virtuous mind, stronger than the fear of death. Carelessness in leading others into temptation is often a cause both of misfortune, on the one hand, and of crimes on the other, many sad instances of which are on record.

“ How oft the sight of means to do ill deeds
Makes ill deeds done ! ”

A singular and well-known illustration of this remark occurred some years ago in a remote part of Ireland, which proves the necessity of not only instructing the ignorant, but of also keeping them from temptation. Lady D —, being about one day to pay the yearly accounts of her numerous tradespeople, drew a very large sum of money for that purpose from the bank, and, seated in her drawing-room, with the whole amount in gold and silver spread on a table, became occupied in parcelling out the sums according as they were due. Her butler entered the room twice while she was thus occupied, and then quietly withdrew; but on his re-entering a third time without any apparent object, she looked up in surprise, and told him not

to return again, unless she rang the bell. Several hours afterwards, the man called loudly to some persons who passed his room, and begged that they would unfasten his door for him, saying, that he had locked himself in, and thrown the key into the garden, where it would be found below the window. This curious acknowledgment led to some inquiry as to the motive of what he had done; and he at last, with great apparent remorse, confessed that seeing so large a sum of money on the drawing-room table, he had felt almost irresistibly tempted to murder his mistress for it, and had returned a third time into her sitting-room, carrying a knife concealed in his hand, with the full intention of doing so, but her accidentally looking up and speaking to him shook his courage; and he had at last locked himself up, as the only means of effectually subduing the strong impulse that had come upon him, on beholding so much gold, to get possession of it, even by murder.

Thus Christians should learn consideration for the temptations, as well as for the wants of their poorer brethren; yet, as we must not only clear a garden of weeds, but plant it with flowers, so also, while endeavouring to keep others from evil, we should also learn to do them good, especially by providing for them the means of religious instruction. In every country there must be either churches in which men can hear the law of God,

or prisons for those who break it; therefore, who would not prefer prevention to cure, by encouraging the work of the clergy rather than of the magistrate? Let no man, even in the most selfish view to his own interest, grudge what he gives for the promulgation of sound religious education, and for the maintenance of good order and morality, by promulgating the hopes of another world, rather than owe his future safety to the punishments necessarily inflicted by the laws of man on earth. There is no difficulty for any one, even the most insignificant in talents or influence, to find abundant occupation for himself in the vineyard of God, as the diligent farmer never complains that he has nothing do. There are always fences to mend, flocks to watch, seed to sow, and reaping to be engaged in. The Christian, whose mind is filled with good intentions and good wishes, will be constantly sending them abroad in good actions; and if such amiable feelings are inwardly his continual guests, they will be seen looking out of the window, in the charm they will give to his manner and expression, even when associating with those the most opposite to himself in conduct and principle.

Every man is happy or miserable in proportion as the temper of his mind places him under the influences of the Divine nature, which enlightens and cheers the prepared mind with joys such as a

worldly mind is wholly unacquainted with. It is not therefore what a man has, but what he is, which causes his felicity, when, according to our Lord's idea of earthly peace, he becomes one of the "poor in spirit," desiring no earthly distinction, coveting no earthly riches, thankful for what he has, and ready to acknowledge it much more than he deserves; but his wealth and prosperity will be chiefly precious, as giving him the greater means of testifying his devotion to the glory of God, and the good of man.

It is deeply to be regretted in England now, that some of those who have long lived abroad, as aliens to their native soil, its moral and religious habits, being driven back, have brought with them that laxity of principle, which is the natural growth of a foreign education. In London now, there are persons of large income, and small scrupulousness, who engage masters to teach their children all the usual accomplishments, "for half-price upon Sundays."

"They're not a moral people, and they know it,
Without the aid of too sincere a poet."

As the progress of mind from childhood to maturity certainly makes a change, so that no man at thirty cares for the rattle and sugar-plums, which were all in all to him during his infancy; so the Christian becomes gradually tamed in his

estimate of all earthly objects of desire, till the calm sunshine of heaven becomes reflected in the mirror of a mind in which nothing else continues prominent; and at last he is enabled to retire from life, not torn out of the world unwillingly, in a struggle of terror and alarm, but departing with dignified and religious resignation. When one of our earliest navigators towards the Northwest passage, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, was spoken with by a ship that met him on the high seas, the captain asked him whether he were not fearful to advance any farther into those inclement regions; to which he replied, "that he was as near heaven at sea as on shore, and as much under the protection of God." Soon after he passed on, the light from his vessel was observed to glimmer on the distant waves, and then suddenly to vanish. Neither Sir Humphrey, nor any of his crew, were ever seen or heard of again. But who can doubt that the brave navigator, trusting in his God, found a safe passage to that better country, where he must have gone, at all events, long before the present century; and that to him, as to all Christians, it is now evident, that whether the wisdom of God grant us protection in temporal or in eternal concerns, we must learn thankfully and confidently to place our trust in the almighty arm of God.

Men must beware of mistaking difficulties for impossibilities, and such a peaceful state of mind,

though rare, has been attained, and may be again, but only in the diligent and ardent endeavour through every hour of existence, to make that hour a step, not only to the grave, which it must be, but also to an eternity of happiness, which it may be. "The younger we are," says Madame de Stael, "the less we have of resignation; for in youth, beyond measure, men desire happiness; men believe then they have a right to it, and rebel at the idea of not obtaining it."

"To a great mind" as Seneca remarks, "nothing earthly is great;" yet as the human mind is most apt to admire what is oldest and most celebrated, ancient monuments and vast buildings raise, perhaps, the sublimest emotions of which we are capable, because their antiquity gives them in our estimation a duration and magnitude which brings them nearest to the works of God himself. Thus the disciples, who had lived chiefly in Galilee, without seeing that noble Jewish edifice, the Temple, were struck with wonder at its snow-white walls and glistening pinnacles, its exceeding magnificence and apparent stability, in the very moment when Christ foretold its impending destruction. The disciples were ready to weep when informed that the glorious edifice which had so long adorned Jerusalem, was to be destroyed; and the Rabbins were so vain of its unequalled splendour, that they used to declare

the Temple “ one of those seven things for which the world was made.”

“ Behold the Temple
In undisturbed and lone serenity,
Finding itself a solemn sanctuary
In the profound of Heaven ! It stands before us
A mount of snow fretted with golden pinnacles ;
The very sun, as though he worshipped there,
Lingers upon the gilded cedar roofs,
And down the long and branching porticoes :
On every flowerry-sculptured capital
Glitters the homage of his parting beams.”

MILMAN.

Some Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem in modern days cause their arms to be tattooed with crosses, in memory of their visit to the sacred city, and that they may carry to the grave a memorial of our crucified Lord ; yet the simple tribute of obedience to every expressed command is far more difficult, and far more acceptable from a devoted heart to the sovereign Lord of the universe, than the most elaborate display of will-worship and invented tributes of respect. On all occasions it is more agreeable to give than to pay, and many would be ready to do what appear to be works of supererogation, while neglecting plain, unadorned, every-day duties. It is in such a spirit that the Romanists, with more than heathen superstition, worship a wafer god, delight in ceremonial rituals,

and add the mere gaudy plumes of external show to that Christian worship for which our distinct directions are, that everything shall be done “ decently and in order.”—King James VI. had a keen dispute with his Scottish subjects formerly, about the decorating of Holyrood chapel, for which he prepared statues of the twelve apostles finely gilt, and being mightily offended when he discovered that their introduction was considered objectionable, he said it was very strange that people would admit figures of griffins and monsters into their churches, and refuse the holy apostles; yet while he grieved his subjects by erecting a splendid altar, adorned by two unlighted candles, two closed bibles, and two basins without water, he might have considered that even in his own reception of an address, it was not the gilded paper, nor the ornamental writing of a petition which prevailed with a monarch, but its earnest sincerity.

We speak of the church as of a mother, and should reverently, as well as decorously, treat our parish church as a parent, not anxious that it should be flaunting in finery, but earnestly desirous that nothing may be wanting which can add to the dignity and decorum of the services.

Many churches on the Continent are like shabby theatres, with decorations of pink and white calico, artificial flowers, and gilt paper ornaments; but

absurd and contemptible as these seem to us, yet if those churches were one solid diamond, they would gain nothing in the estimation of Him to whom all worship is due, unless the hearts within were humble, contrite, and obedient to every social, as well as to every religious duty. It was an old problem with philosophers, which may be extended to Christians, "how to use lawful things lawfully," as even good men may be enamoured too much with external pomp in the worship of God. That is but an external setting, which, unless the jewel of the heart be genuine, will but render its falsity more obvious, by the surrounding glitter.

When the proud Lorenzo de Medici died, kissing a gorgeous crucifix, in all the pomp of Popish ceremony, we must surely believe that one heartfelt prayer, or one sigh of genuine humble penitence, would have been more acceptable to his Saviour than all the gold of Ophir. It is singular to contrast the Divine simplicity of Christian worship in the time of our Lord and his disciples, with all the vain-glorious ceremonies, and devotional trifling, with which the perverted taste of wilful man so soon after encumbered it; and necessary as it is to have the House of God as handsome as circumstances allow, and prepared with as much attention to propriety and reverence as possible, yet Christians have to remember that it is not the work of their hands, but of their

hearts, by which their worth, in the eye of Heaven, shall be tested. "Unless," says Walpole, "men could be cured of being fools, it is useless to cure them of one folly, as that is only making room for some other." But the extent to which mere bodily worship may be carried, is peculiarly exemplified in the Greek church, where nothing can exceed the magnificence of the ritual, the dresses, the decorations, the paintings, and the sculpture. There all but the nature of man is sublime! In 1844, at a Greek church in Venice, the stately ceremonies, as described in Webb's travels, appear quite up to the standard of mere natural taste, though very different from the sacred model of Scripture; and let those who have an increasing bias for an ornamented religion see to what the tendency of such a mere scenic representation leads. "The Bishop wore a pectoral gold cross round his neck, and a round stiff black cap. The worshippers, as they enter, go up straight to the holy doors, standing before which, they make three very low bows, crossing themselves thrice; then they kiss the icon of the Saviour, on the south side of the iconostasis, and next the icon of the head of our Lord, on the south jamb of the holy doors. Then they again bow and cross themselves three times. Then they kiss the picture of the Virgin Mary, at the north of the iconostasis; and her head on the north

“ So, saith the God of grace,
My gospel shall descend,
Almighty to effect
The purpose I intend :

Millions of souls
Shall feel its power ;
And bear it down
To millions more.

“ Joy shall begin your march,
And peace protect your ways,
While all the mountains round
Echo melodious praise :

The vocal groves
Shall sing to God,
And every tree
Consenting nōd.”

DODDRIDGE.

CHAP. VI.

“ When adverse winds and waves arise,
And in my heart despondence sighs ; —
When life her throng of care reveals,
And weakness o'er my spirit steals, —
Grateful I hear the kind decree,
That as my day my strength shall be.

“ When with sad footsteps, memory roves
'Mid smitten joys, and buried loves, —
When sleep my tearful pillow flies,
And dewy morning drinks my sighs, —
Still to thy promise, Lord, I flee,
That as my day my strength shall be.

“ One trial more must yet be past,
One pang,—the keenest, and the last ;
And when, with brow convuls'd and pale,
My feeble quivering heart-strings fail,
Redeemer, grant my soul to see
That as my day my strength shall be.”

MATT. xxiv.

WHEN Vossius, the infidel, was relating to Charles II. all the wonders he knew respecting China, the king in astonishment exclaimed, “Why ! here is a man who believes everything except the Bible !” And if clever men would but give due attention to the mere fulfilment of

prophecy, which is before their own eyes at this hour, who amongst them could harbour a doubt that it is a standing, a daily, and a palpable miracle, worked by the Creator and Lord of the universe in our sight.

Verse 2. History describes how completely the

prophecy, which our Saviour here promulgates, respecting the Jews and their splendid temple, was forty years afterwards fulfilled, in the most literal and disastrous manner, upon that splendid metropolis of religion. Eleven hundred thousand Israelites fell in defence of their city and temple ! Titus crucified sometimes as many as five hundred in a day ! Nearly a hundred thousand were sold as slaves, and the remainder have ever since had their descendants dispersed as captives, persecuted throughout the kingdoms of the earth, though still existing, and still a distinct people.

Titus sincerely wished, when Jerusalem was taken, to preserve the temple, yet even with his almost despotic imperial authority, he could not restrain the enraged soldiers from destroying it utterly ; though the labour of mischief must have been enormous, as the strong and massive walls seemed built for eternity. Josephus mentions that several of the stones were seventy feet long, ten wide, and eight high. The Roman soldiers, however, saw everything around them radiant

with gold, which shone dazzlingly in the wild light of the flames they kindled, and therefore supposed that incalculable treasures were laid up in the sanctuary. A soldier unperceived, thrust a lighted torch between the hinges of the door; the whole building was instantly in flames, and the blinding smoke having forced the officers to retire, the noble edifice was left to its fate. So complete was the destruction, that afterwards, Turnus Rufus ploughed up, with "ruin's merciless plough-share," the ground on which that glorious temple and city had stood, in search of the treasure buried beneath their walls. How incredible is it, therefore, that modern men should pretend to identify every spot mentioned in sacred history and every building at Jerusalem!

Christ, surrounded by his disciples, sat now upon the Mount of Olives, as a judge on the bench, while the temple and city of Jerusalem stood in a magnificent panorama before him, as criminals cited to the bench, on both of which He passed sentence. Since their destruction, books have been written against Christianity with the utmost enmity, by Celsus and Porphyry, betraying as much violence as Deists of the present day, and some of their writings are still extant; but though bitter enemies of religion, they never denied the facts recorded of Christ and his apostles, or their miracles. These authors,

living so near the time when these supernatural things were performed, yet dared not deny their authenticity ; because, being publicly done, and so lately too, neither Jews nor Heathens, in those days, attempted to deny that our Lord's works were supernatural, but ascribed them to the power of magic. The enemies of Christ now, would substitute for the intercession of our only Mediator a sort of modified paganism, making the saints all in all ; and instead of the household deities formerly worshipped by the Romans, they would seek help from those who were, during their earthly career, mere sinful mortals like themselves. Thus St. Anthony of Padua is supposed to deliver his votaries from water ; St. Barbara is a refuge in thunder ; St. Blass cures disorders of the throat ; St. Lucia heals diseases of the eye ; St. Domingo cures fever ; St. Roque protects from the plague ; and it is but a few weeks since the bone of a long deceased saint is represented as having cured in this country a case of tic doloroux.

“ Hear the just law—the judgment of the skies,
He that hates truth shall be the dupe of lies.”

Verse 5. The disciples here mingled three inquiries into one ; and our Lord replies in this, as well as in the following chapters, not

by answering each question apart, but by mingling his prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world, in language so applicable to both, that there is a difficulty sometimes in discriminating precisely the words relating to the one or the other. Though much trouble is taken by commentators to distinguish the difference, we might as well attempt, when the sun blazes into the ocean, to divide the real from the reflected light. Dark and perplexed as the minds of Christ's disciples still appeared, all their mistakes were to be rectified, and their minds at once enlightened on the day of Pentecost.

When Cicero was asked which oration of Demosthenes he admired most, he replied, "The longest." How much more to us is the longest address of our divine Saviour the best, — where every word is precious, and where the subject and the language rise both so superior to the highest elevation of human rhetoric. Our Lord now instructs his Church, not only concerning the great events of that primitive age, but concerning men in general, to the end of time; and this discourse slides insensibly into an address, which is continued throughout the next chapter; testifying especially, that all men, in respect to their original stock of righteousness, are utterly bankrupt.

The excellent Evelyn, in his epitaph on himself,

has these interesting remarks: "Having lived in an age of extraordinary events, I learned from them this truth, which I desire may be thus communicated to posterity: that all is vanity which is not honest, and that there is no solid wisdom but in real piety." Old Thomas Adam too, thus writes, respecting himself: "I know all is for the best, and would leave the choice where it should be, whether the knot of life is to be cut, or gently untied. Indeed sense, memory, intellect, at the age of seventy-three, are waning apace; and I believe, I flatter myself, in thinking that I am only half dead."

"O Thou, whose all-enlivening ray
Can turn my darkness into day,
Disperse, great God, my mental gloom,
And with thyself my soul illume.
Tho' gathering sorrows swell my breast,
Speak but the word—and peace and rest
Shall set my troubled spirit free,
In sweet communion, Lord, with Thee.
What though in this heart-searching hour,
Thou dim'st my intellectual power;
The gracious discipline I own,
And wisdom seek at thy blest throne.
A wisdom not of earthly mould,
Not such as learned volumes hold;
Not selfish, arrogant and vain,
That chills the heart and fires the brain;
I seek the wisdom from above,
Pure, peaceful, gentle, fervent love."

BISHOP JEBB.

Our Lord's answer to the disciples
Verse 4. tends more to engage their prudence, than to satisfy their curiosity; more to prepare them for meeting the events, than to give them a distinct idea of the events themselves. Three times in this one discourse Christ predicts the appearance of false prophets; and truly, as an ancient Father declares, "It is hard to teach men, but easy to deceive them. They learn with pain, if they do attain to learn, by means of the few who are wise; but they are deceived most readily by the multitudes of the ignorant, and not only by others, but by themselves." In truth, those most inquisitive concerning the secret things which belong not to them, are the most easily deceived by impostors, who are much more dangerous enemies than persecutors.

How justly were those Jews, who killed the true prophets, left to be ensnared by false prophets. He who extinguishes his torch cannot be sure that it shall ever be lighted again, and they who crucified the true Messiah are now to be deceived by false Christs and pretended Messiahs. Josephus, himself a Jewish priest, though long a prisoner to the Romans under Titus, mentions several impostors between this time and the destruction of Jerusalem, who kept the people in a state of feverish excitement, promising that the appointed deliverer of the Jews would immediately

appear. Thus the undying hopes of the fiercest fanatics were long kept alive by renewed predictions, so that while famine-stricken and exhausted, they fought inch by inch to protect their city and temple, in full confidence of the miraculous protection, which they ultimately expected, but never obtained. When the whole surrounding country was lighted up by the blazing temple, and amidst the thunder of its falling timbers, the echoes of the mountains resounded with the shouts and shrieks of the conflicting soldiery, one of these false prophets, proclaiming that God had commanded all Jews to await a display of his Almighty power at the temple, led up about six thousand unarmed and defenceless people to a small part of the outer cloister, which still remained standing; but the Roman soldiers set it on fire, and every soul perished. In after times, the names of no less than twenty-four false Messiahs are recorded, as having appeared between the time of the Emperor Adrian and the year 1682. Since then, ages have elapsed without any one appearing claiming to be that Messiah whom the ancient people of God have so long expected; and many Jews in modern days have been the more easily converted to Christianity, from perceiving that the time has undeniably elapsed within which they were to hope for their Messiah's appearance, and yet he comes not. The Popish religion sets up in our

own day a false Christ, when the Pope, in our Lord's name, usurps all His offices, and most presumptuously parodies that dignity and power, which were, in the simplicity of perfect virtue, so nobly and so divinely testified by our holy Redeemer.

“The man of sin,
The mystery of iniquity, was there
In pomp, who pardon'd sin, unpardon'd still,
And in the name of God blasphem'd, and did
All wicked, all abominable things;
Deceiv'd thus his votaries, who left the earth
Secure of bliss, deceived till now, and learn'd
Too late, him fallible, themselves accus'd,
And all their passports and certificates,
A lie !”

So faithful were the early disciples of our Holy Faith, that it became a proverb in primitive times for what was impossible, “ You may sooner draw away a Christian from Christ ! ” There is not, however, a greater enemy to true faith than vain credulity, against which our Lord here warns his disciples. Thinking men must not follow every empiric who puts up a finger to direct them to Christ. Hermits, who place religion in a monastic life, will say, “ He is in the desert,” while priests, who represent the consecrated wafer to be Christ, say, “ He is in the secret chamber, He is in this shrine, or in that image.” Thus, in fact, each sect

appropriates Christ's spiritual presence to its own denomination, as if that party had the monopoly of our Lord, and as if His kingdom must stand or fall, must live or die with them. How few have been so conscientious in adhering to principle, rather than to party, as the excellent Bishop Ken, who suffered imprisonment by James II. for protesting against his Majesty's papistical tendency, and was nevertheless suspended afterwards by King William, for refusing to give up his allegiance to James II.

When Christ was born, universal
Verses 6-7. peace reigned in the empire, so that the temple of Janus had been shut, and at the time when our Lord made this prophecy of approaching war and desolation, the empire was in perfect tranquillity. From that time, however, when the Jews crucified Christ, the sword never departed from their house; and those who would not hear the message of peace, were then made to hear the message of war. Jerusalem hereafter fell under a peculiar curse, and witnessed a far greater portion of human misery than any other spot on the visible earth. By the concurrent testimony of all ancient historians, this period alluded to in Christ's prophecy was distinguished from all others before or since, by the wars, massacres, and tumults, which took place prior to the destruction of Jerusalem.

Four emperors, Nero, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, endured violent deaths within the short space of eighteen months, while these changes of government led to most destructive commotions; famines also prevailed four times during the reign of Claudius; and it is believed that most of the apostles, sooner or later, died by persecution. Thus ultimate events form the plainest comment on this passage; but the disciples are encouraged not to be troubled with such fearful circumstances, so as to forsake their station, nor to imagine that the ruin of their nation would immediately take place, even though the enemies of Christ's Church grew very hot, and many of her friends very cool.

Notwithstanding all the commotions and scandals here predicted, the Gospel was soon to be preached throughout the known empire, and in all different parts of the known world; after which the end of the Jewish church and state would come. The persecution of Christians at Jerusalem helped to disperse them; so that they fled everywhere, still preaching and promulgating the Word; so that in less than thirty years after the death of Christ, and before the destruction of Jerusalem, the Gospel was already known in Idumea, Syria, Mesopotamia, Egypt, and other parts of Africa, as well as in Ethiopia, and in the

seven Asiatic churches. From this time, therefore, the peculiar and exclusive privileges of the Jews were at an end, and their city left desolate.

Nothing can be more terrifying than the historical description of all that a few years after this prophecy occurred at Jerusalem under the command of Titus, whom the Romans named "the delight of human kind." "It was dreadful," says Josephus, his prisoner, "to witness the deep and silent misery of the people. They dared not utter their griefs, their very groans were watched and stifled in their hearts. But it was even more frightful to see the callous hard-heartedness which had seized all ranks; all were become alike reckless from desperation. Here was no feeling for the nearest kindred, their very burial was neglected; all the desires, the hopes, the interests of life were extinguished; death was so near, it was scarcely worth while to avoid it. Men went trampling over dead bodies as over the common pavement, and this familiarity with murder, as it deadened the hearts of the citizens, so it increased the ferocity of the Roman soldiers in Jerusalem."

"Her streets are razed, her maidens sold for slaves,
Her gates thrown down, her elders in their graves;
Her feasts are holden 'mid the Gentiles' scorn,
By stealth her priesthood's holy garments worn;

And where her temple crown'd the glittering rock,
The wandering shepherd folds his evening flock ;
Proud Cæsar's plough-share o'er her ruins driven,
Fulfil'd at length the tardy doom of Heaven ;
The wrathful vial's drops at length are pour'd
On the rebellious race that crucified their Lord."

No wonder that our merciful Saviour, when He distinctly foresaw the miseries of Jerusalem, desired, with mournful sympathy, that the Jews should weep for themselves; but should it not compose the mind of a Christian, whatever may happen, to consider how unchangeable are the Divine counsels, by which all events are governed. Even if clouds long conceal the sunshine, they do not extinguish the sun; and if our happiness be interrupted, still it cannot be abolished; therefore any inordinate grief or anxiety is tantamount to a quarrel with the decree of our Almighty Creator.

If a dog bite the stone thrown at him, he would, if possible, bite the hand that throws it, and there is rebellion in all excessive grief for the blow that Infinite Wisdom sends. That was a rough saying of a country clergyman, and yet not inappropriate, to a melancholy lady, whom he found at the end of many years as inconsolable for her misfortunes as ever, " Madam ! have you not yet forgiven your Heavenly Father for afflicting you ? "

An old house is taken down, though with noise, dust, and danger, if a new and better is to be

built; and thus the things that are shaken must be removed, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. God's judgments are not to be always delayed, any more than the sun will stand still, that a sinner may have leisure to repent, while he deliberately proposes to live meanwhile in self-indulgence, and at last to die in peace,—to provoke God's justice through life, and in the end to elude it, by repenting a few minutes before he expires.

When we look forward to the eternity
Verse 8. of misery awaiting those who obstinately refuse Christ and his Gospel, we may truly say concerning the severest temporal judgments, as Christ did here, “All these are the beginning of sorrows.” The sins to be repented of become every day greater, while the power to repent diminishes. Thus, when clouds have gathered heavily over the whole heavens, and it continues raining many days, the sun, even if it do become visible, has its brightness dimmed and obscured.

The best Christians had always the
Verse 9. worst usage, yet the cause not only makes a martyr, but comforts him; therefore Christ plainly tells his disciples now, that though hitherto they had experienced little, the time was now come when they had very hard things to suffer;—when persecutions should arise, many

professed believers would apostatise, — falling in the storm, though they had stood in fair weather, and becoming even bitter enemies to the Christians, whom they had so treacherously deserted. Apostates usually become the most cruel and violent persecutors, but to faithful disciples or martyrs the Crown of Glory will make amends for all. A certain anticipation of that happy consummation will enable men to prefer death at a stake with the persecuted, rather than life in a palace with the persecutors.

Christ refers the Jews to a prophecy Verse 15. of Daniel, that they might see how the ruins of their city and temple were spoken of in the Old Testament, which both confirmed our Lord's prediction, and took off its odium. Daniel spoke more plainly of the Messiah and his kingdom than any of the Old Testament prophets did, and it was a common saying of the Jewish Church, "This world was made for the Messiah." An abomination was the scriptural term for an idol, but it here signifies the Roman armies; for Josephus relates that when Jerusalem was taken, the conquerors brought their idols into the temple, and placing them over the eastern gate, sacrificed to them, in sight of the few brave but famine-stricken Jews whose bold spirits had survived to witness their own defeat.

“On to the temple! brethren, Israel on!
Though every slippery street with carnage swims,
Ho! spite of famish'd hearts and wounded limbs,
Still, still, while yet there stands one holy stone,
Fight for your God, his sacred house to save,
Or have its blazing ruins for your grave!”

MILMAN.

By the special Providence of God,
Verse 16. after the Romans under Cestus Gallus
made their first advance towards Jerusalem, they
unexpectedly withdrew again. That gave, as it
were, a signal for the Christians to retire, which
from regard to this admonition of Christ's, they
did, and thus preserved their lives among the
mountains; and not being in “the winter,” neither
bad roads, cold weather, nor short days impeded
their flight. Thus, when Christians leave this
world altogether, may it be neither in the cold
days of indevotion, nor in the short days of a late
repentance!

Our compassionate Redeemer wept at the an-
ticipation of those calamities which awaited the
Jews, and few could read the description of them
by Josephus without weeping too; for thus speaks
that faithful historian: “If the misfortunes of all
men from the beginning of the world were com-
pared with those of the Jews, they would appear
much inferior.” Is not this precisely what our
Saviour now prophesied? yet Josephus was not

born until Christ had been crucified, and till these prophecies were on the very verge of a miraculous fulfilment.

“—— the rapt stranger shall admire
Where that proud city stood which was Jerusalem.”

Verse 16. All Christians are admonished, as they would quit a falling house, or leave a sinking ship, to hasten from Jerusalem, where the stoutest heart could not make head against, nor contend with, impending ruin. Thus, if God open a door of escape from destruction, all men ought to seek for safety; yet care must be taken in avoiding danger not to avoid duty, and different conduct may become incumbent on persons differently circumstanced. A common soldier may fly, when the standard-bearer must face death itself rather than stir; and thus the minister of Christ will stand in the fore-front of the battle, the first to suffer, or the last to fly, as long as a principle is to be maintained, or a soul to be saved. These directions given by Christ now, were forty years afterwards obeyed with such salutary effect, that the Christians at once fled to Pella, a small city beyond Jordan; wherefore, it is believed, that not a single Christian perished in the devastating massacres which attended the siege of Jerusalem.

"Yes, 'mid yon angry and destroying signs,
O'er us the rainbow of thy mercy shines,
We hail, we bless the covenant of its beam,
Almighty to avenge, Almightyest to redeem."

MILMAN.

He that stood on the house-top
Verses 17-18. when the alarm comes, is forbid to come down into the house, though it were to save his effects, but he must escape the nearest way; and likewise, he that shall be in the field will find it his wisest course to run immediately, without returning to fetch his wealth, or even his clothes. This last means probably the outer garment, commonly laid aside as an incumbrance by the Jews when they worked or ran. Thus men, convinced of their utter misery and danger in a sinful state, must fly to Christ, without, on any pretext, lingering, lest they perish eternally. God never leaves himself without a witness in the heart; for truly, great guilt and great peace never do exist together; but unless the human heart be properly influenced by affliction, it becomes as an anvil does, only the harder for every blow.

"Patient, resigned, and humble wills
Impregnably resist all ills."

BISHOP KEN.

The penniless traveller can lose nothing by robbers; and it was to his own disciples that

Christ recommended this indifference about their houses and clothes, because the habitation and treasure of Christians being in Heaven, no enemy could plunder them of what they most valued. In sorrow, the Christian may be a sufferer, but he cannot be a loser. While trusting in God to order his affairs for him, he may be said, even in the worst earthly vicissitudes, to exchange pence for pounds ; and when leaving all his worldly treasures behind him, he may adopt the saying of Bias the philosopher, who fled empty-handed, exclaiming, “ I have all my property with me.”

None of the twelve apostles to whom Verse 20. Christ now prophesied, except John, lived to see that dismal day when Jerusalem fell ; but this warning saved the lives of their successors and converts. St. Matthew’s Gospel was published some years before that unexpected destruction, therefore many Jews might have received the warning, but their perishing through an obstinate unbelief of this prophecy, was an emblem of their eternally perishing by a headstrong unbelief of Christ’s warnings against the wrath to come. When these calamities began, the Jews expected that Messiah was at last to appear for their deliverance, and the lower they became reduced, the more readily they listened to any reports of this kind, so that many impostors were now emboldened to personate Him.

Christians were reminded that the
Verse 27. destruction of Jerusalem would not be secret, but conspicuous like lightning. Thus the Roman armies entered Judæa by the east, and carried their ravages to the west, in a rapid and tremendous progress. The eagles here alluded to by Christ were the Roman Standard, representing those ravenous birds, ready to devour a people reprobated and given up as a dead carcase by Providence. The Jews could no more preserve themselves from the Romans, than the carcase can secure itself from the eagles. Amazing, and almost unaccountable, is the distance from which birds of prey can descry a carcase, and suddenly swoop down upon it in countless flocks ; and the far-seeing eye of an eagle is the most wonderful object in anatomy, having in it more lenses than Lord Ross's telescope. Travellers in Arabia mention that a small speck will become visible in the distant sky, growing gradually larger and nearer, till it turns out to be a vulture, which has discovered from that immeasurable distance a carcase lying on the sand, to which it steers a course as direct and steady, as if it were provided with a chart and a compass for guides. Thus unexpectedly and suddenly, from an almost trackless distance, did the Roman army fall on Jerusalem, as Titus, with rapidity, during the winter season, sailed at once with his expedition from Achaia to

Alexandria, where he joined Vespasian, who was in waiting at the head of three of the most distinguished legions of the Roman soldiery, and who had mustered 60,000 men, having the complete command of the whole civilised world to assist his enterprise. "Josephus describes the order of march with the accuracy of an eye-witness," says Milman; "and he must, indeed, have watched the stern and regular advance of the enemy with the trembling curiosity of the sailor, who sees the tempest slowly gathering, which is about to burst, and perhaps wreck his weak and ill-appointed bark."

"The host passed on in its awful magnificence," until Vespasian halted on the frontier of beautiful Galilee, now doomed to be the mournful theatre of carnage and desolation. Nothing could now prevent the impending destruction; but even when suffering is inevitable, Christians should pray for its mitigation. We all know that unavoidable calamities are impending over ourselves,—pain, sickness, sorrow, and death, are all approaching,—yet we must not go on like ruined gamesters, who think they may play on safely, as they have no more to lose, but we should urgently entreat that these trials may all be ameliorated. Even death, at thought of which the bravest hearts have quailed, and which the most timid have been strengthened to meet with unflinching courage,—even death, which each individual must undergo, and undergo

alone,—even death, may be despoiled of its fiercest alarms and sufferings, if we faithfully and earnestly pray that its worst accompaniments may be spared us.

Many Christians, unless Christ had given them this warrant, might have scrupled to travel far on the Sabbath day, and in Judæa it was almost impracticable to do so, as the gates of every city were usually closed. In some parts of America now, a rope is commonly drawn across the principal streets on Sunday, to prevent the using of carriages; and these verses plainly intimate the desire of Christ to have a weekly Sabbath observed in his Church.

Though the least sin must not be committed to escape the greatest danger, yet is it evident here, that Christians, to save their lives, might have fled on the Sabbath, otherwise our Lord would have forbid them under any circumstances to stir. Though ease to the body must not be mainly consulted, it may nevertheless be duly considered, and the flight of the Christians was eventually delayed till spring. We must take what God sends, and when he sends it; but though the cup may not pass from us, yet, preparatory to inevitable trials, it becomes desirable to lay in a stock of prayers, that the spirit of endurance may be fortified,—so that when death itself is at hand, it may be to us like the break of day, which, while it

terrifies the robber, is a comfort to the honest traveller.

The history of the Jewish wars, by Josephus, has in it more tragical passages than perhaps any narrative whatever, for so bloody were its details, that "the Roman swords became blunt with slaying." Many a city has been made desolate, but never was any desolation like this! Yet, can we wonder that the ruin of Jerusalem was unparalleled, when the sin of Jerusalem was unparalleled sin, and when the greatest crime ever committed on the earth was the crucifixion of Jesus Christ?

The Jews, blinded by passion, did not discover the enormity of their own guilt, as a person fails to discover in a mirror soiled and breathed upon, the real expression of his own countenance; but their punishment awfully fulfilled the warning of our martyred Saviour. We read that when the Roman soldiers broke into houses for plunder, they found whole families of dead persons, and houses full of carcases destroyed by famine. The whole city ran with gore, so that many things when burning were extinguished by blood!

"And yet, as though the earth cast up again
Souls discontented with a single death,
They grew beneath the slaughter. Neither battle,
Nor famine, nor the withering pestilence,
Subdued these prodigals of blood."

On ordinary occasions a single death is observed and felt, as a single leaf that falls in the calm sunshine of the early autumn ; but now a storm and whirlwind raged, destined, as it appeared, to scatter the whole forest in the sweeping blast.

Our Lord himself arose from the east, and lightened to the west, and very soon the Gospel lightning reached our own island of Great Britain ; for Tertullian, who wrote in the second century, makes this remark on that subject : "The fortresses of Britain, though inaccessible by the Romans, were already occupied by Jesus Christ." It is said to be natural for all living creatures to turn their faces towards lightning, but those who gaze towards any one part of the heavens will in a moment see it blazing over the whole. Thus when Jesus comes in the clouds as lightning does, "every eye shall see Him." Christ went to Heaven in a cloud, and will in like manner come again. Most of the visible intercourse between Heaven and earth is by the clouds. They are the medium of participation drawn by Heaven from the earth, distilled by Heaven upon the earth.

There shall be many circumstances in common between the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world, which render Christ's description applicable to both ; especially its sudden-

ness, and the unprepared state in which the great mass of the people should be surprised. How sublime is the silence with which the government of God is conducted ! Observe the silent march of time, the silent work of the Spirit in our souls, the silent approach of death, and the deep unbroken silence of the grave. All these are impressive to man, being so different from the turbulence and excitement natural to himself ; yet the Christian too, must in silent meditation seek for God. Nothing is so difficult as to bring a man and himself together in self-conference, but it must often be done if we would know God and ourselves. The silence of Heaven and earth will at last, however, be broken by the thunder of our summons to judgment, when the Omnipotent Creator and Governor calls us forth from the grave ; therefore we should be ready now ; either to receive death as a friend, or to overcome him as an enemy, but never to view him as a stranger ; and it is truly wonderful with what facility the human mind accommodates itself to whatever circumstances, strange or dreadful though they be, it frequently contemplates.

Verse 29. Here our Lord begins to speak exclusively of his last coming ; not so much in the language of man as of God, with whom all times, past or future, are equally present.

With Him a thousand years are as one day; therefore, St. Paul afterwards explains to the Thessalonians, that they were not, from our Lord's expressions, to suppose these final events immediately at hand. This, to the trembling sinner, would be a welcome postponement of his fears, as worldly men would dread the advent of our Lord; just as thieves, robbers, and beasts of prey would dread the light of morning, because it interrupts their vocation, and endangers a discovery.

“The sign of the Son of Man,” here Verse 30. means a signal appearance of the power and justice of Jesus Christ, in avenging his own blood on those who imprecated the guilt of it upon themselves and their children. It is an inscrutable decree of Providence, but obvious to every one, that the crimes of parents are visited on their children in this world, by reducing them to beggary, misery, or disgrace; and so terribly was this imprecation fulfilled on these Jews, as well as on their descendants, that more persons perished at the siege of Jerusalem than the whole inhabitants of London now. The entire male population of Judæa had then assembled within that city for the Passover.

The Jewish victims of Roman tyranny were first whipped, then tormented with an ingenious variety of tortures, and at length crucified. The

soldiers testified their fierce delight in cruelty by nailing the sufferers, by way of a jest, in various fantastic attitudes on the cross, until at length the multitudes of sufferers became so innumerable, that room was wanting for crosses, and crosses for the countless bodies. During the direful famine which ensued, men ate what the lowest animals refused to taste, and a woman of Perea, previously possessed of wealth and luxury, became so maddened by famine, that in a wild paroxysm of hunger she killed and partly devoured her own child. When the soldiers, attracted by a smell of food, burst open the door, she, with appalling indifference, uncovered the remains, and even the savage robbers retired speechless with horror.

“—— the remnant of a child !
A human child !—ay ! start ! as started we—
Whereat she shriek’d aloud, and clapp’d her hands :
‘Oh ! dainty and fastidious appetites !
‘The mother feasts upon her babe, and strangers
‘Loathe the repast—and then—my beautiful child !
‘The treasure of my heart ! my bosom’s joy !’
And then in her cool madness did she spurn us
Out of her doors. Oh, still—oh, still, I hear her,
And I shall hear her till my day of death.”

MILMAN.

All those horrors, which occurred forty years after our Lord’s death, were now distinctly before his prophetic eye; when he desired the daugh-

ters of Jerusalem to weep, not for him, but for themselves.

The historical account by Josephus was authenticated by the signature of the emperor Titus, which he affixed himself, in testimony to its entire veracity, and also by the autograph of king Agrippa.

It is singular that after the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, their own capital became, and has continued to this day, the centre of an idolatry which Christians might blush to call Christianity, with the Inquisition in its train, the sale of indulgences, the worship of the Virgin, and other distortions of that Holy Faith, which is man's all upon earth, and the earnest of his all in Heaven. It is wonderful that he who professes and teaches such a perverted creed, can look God, his conscience, and the world in the face without being ashamed to have so disfigured the symmetry of Divine truth by mere Pagan superstitions.

“The sun shall be darkened.” Then
Verse 29. the moon also, which shines only with a borrowed light, must of course, if the luminary from which she borrows her light fail, become likewise a bankrupt. Thus we learn in Holy Scripture the solemn truth, that the sinner, if eternally lost, shall have neither a drop of water nor a ray of light to refresh or to cheer him in

the long course of his hopeless and endless condemnation.

As our Christian congregations are ^{Verse 31.} summoned together by the sound of bells, so the Jews were called to assemble by means of a wind instrument, formed of the horns of an ox or of a ram. In some instances it was made of brass or silver, and was sounded softly to collect the people, but in times of calamity, rebellion, or war, it was sounded loud; a difference which is here referred to, when our Saviour, who speaks to the Jews always in terms to which they were accustomed, here mentions a great sound of a trumpet.

The bell that sounds from the monastery of Camaldoli, is said to emit so loud and solemn a sound, that it often suggests to the minds of those who for the first time hear it, an idea of the last trumpet. Many persons in the present day declare that never while they live shall they forget that memorable night recently at Paris, when the inhabitants were all awakened from their peaceful slumbers by the thundering sound of the tocsin, only rang on emergencies of imminent national danger, and which on that occasion gave no uncertain sound. It had never been heard since the former French Revolution of the previous century; and so unexpected a burst of danger and alarm breaking in on the solemn

stillness of midnight might have suggested to any Christian mind the anticipation of another awaking much more awful and equally sudden, which shall hereafter disturb the slumbers of the grave.

History records that St. Chad, Bishop of Lichfield, whenever there was a sound of thunder, hastened to church, and there solemnly prostrated himself in prayer, which he continued as long as the storm lasted, in anticipation of that awful day, when Christ shall come a second time to judge the world. In some Roman Catholic countries the church-bells are rung during the whole time of a thunder-storm to propitiate the Deity.

When reading so solemn an allusion by our Divine Lord to the last trumpet, does it not seem an act of extremely questionable propriety when, in an ordinary concert-room, multitudes attend to hear that favourite and certainly very sublime oratorio performed, into which an imitation is introduced of the last trumpet! If we solemnly consider that the hour is approaching when each individual there assembled, shall arise at the awful sound, to stand as a guilty sinner before his God, the anticipation should cause his heart to shrink. Such music is too impressive and solemn for any place not consecrated to the worship and praise of that Almighty Being at

whose word sinners must fall as a sacrifice to Divine justice, while saints shall enter on their everlasting jubilee. When that mighty trumpet sounds to which our Saviour alludes, the day of gathering has come. Then distance of place shall keep none out of Heaven, if distance of affection do not, for Christ shall gather together His elect from the "four winds;" an expression implying the four points of the compass, or the uttermost parts of the earth.

"And as a husbandman, with reaping bands,
In harvest separates the precious wheat
Selected from the tares; so did they part
Mankind, the good and bad, to right and left,
To meet no more. These ne'er again to smile,
Nor those to weep: these never more to share
Society of mercy, with the saints;
Nor henceforth these to suffer with the vile.
Strange parting! not for hours, nor days, nor months,
Nor for ten thousand times ten thousand years,
But for a whole eternity."

POLLOK.

CHAP. VII.

“Where are the great in might, the grand in soul?
Gone, glimmering through the dream of things that were.
First in the race that led to glory’s goal,
They came and pass’d away.—Is this the whole ? ”

BYRON.

MATT. xxiv. 27.

SENECA, discussing the shortness of life, says, that “we do not first receive it so short as we make it;” but it is wonderful that so fleeting a thing as our existence here can afford time for the great and comprehensive business we have to do, and which forbids us to waste one fleeting moment, and it would be well for all Christians to imitate the diligent example of Luther, who being asked how in the multiplicity of his engagements he had found opportunity to translate the Bible, replied, “Not a day without a verse.” Such was Luther’s delight in the solemnising effect of sacred harmony, that he used to say, “the great enemy of mankind hates music ! ”

It is curious to observe how many well-intentioned people consider the afflictions of life in their own case as the chastisement of a father who strikes even when not angry for the good of those he would mercifully discipline; but when

they view the sorrows of others they are very apt to pronounce them judgments. Christians have no warrant, however, to declare on what occasions God specially interferes; for such rash declarations are like those of the barbarians who thought when a viper fastened upon St. Paul's hand that he must be a murderer not fit to live; but the next instant, that he was a god not liable to die! Many may remember, a few years ago, when hundreds of persons were crushed to death by the roof of a London theatre falling in: soon after which the celebrated Mr. Irving delivered a sermon on the subject, announcing that this fearful accident was a peculiar infliction of Almighty wrath. Very soon afterwards, however, the church in Fife, where he was himself preaching, also fell in; as if to teach him and all who heard him that it is presumptuous to interpret for our own purposes the intention of God's decrees. There are thousands existing on the earth who deserve not the light of day, and yet the sun shines on, but man very naturally expects during his own short-lived existence to see immediate rewards or punishments. It is reported of Dionysius, that sailing out to sea, after he had wickedly pillaged a temple, he was astonished to find himself making a peculiarly prosperous voyage, and exclaimed, "Are the gods pleased with sacrilege!"

Arbitrary Christians are apt to fancy that they know the mind of Christ, when it is only their own mind that they have ascertained, and with them the word "schismatic" means any one who differs from themselves. Even when engaged in sacred worship, the language of some people is more like that of one prescribing to God than praying to him, having more of dictation in it than of supplication. It was the well-known habit of a devout and most learned Christian, who disapproved of long, rambling and inconsiderate petitions, to meditate an hour before he knelt down to utter a prayer, the saying of which, in few but expressive words, occupied not above two or three minutes.

A vulgar-minded man is apt also, in addressing his Maker and his Saviour, to use terms of endearment, such as are suitable only between companions or equals, and the tone of irreverent confidence adopted by some persons in their prayers is totally unwarrantable. It was a good rebuke, given to a Roman citizen, by the Emperor Augustus, who, being invited to a very parsimonious entertainment, found himself addressed in a tone of unusual intimacy; upon which he looked indignantly round and asked, "Friend! how came you and I to be so familiar?"

Our Lord brings out now, the practical
Verse 32. application of what He has previously

said, solemnly warning Christians to prepare for these events, because His word is more sure and lasting than Heaven and earth. None of these awful judgments are adjourned *sine die*, for a certain day is appointed, though that day and hour are kept as a great and solemn secret.

“ For Heaven has wisely hid from human sight
The dark decrees of future fate,
And sown their seeds in depth of night.”

When Satan wishes to entice men, he
verses 37, 38. gives no alarm, but as a skilful fowler takes his aim, while carefully keeping the danger out of sight. Let those therefore who build for themselves a mere castle in the air of religion, seriously reflect, that in imagining a God of unconditional forgiveness and of indiscriminating mercy, they not only lose sight of all that is written in Scripture, but likewise of all that is written in human life. Is not the whole history of mankind blotted with tears, and do we not perceive around us a scene of universal suffering, desolation, and death? There are indolent careless men who would, if that were possible, deny the certainty of decay, as well as of dissolution; who would willingly conceal that flowers ever fade, that night follows day, or that death succeeds to life, and who might argue very plausibly, that it is inconsistent with the wisdom and goodness of this

world's Creator to destroy the work of His own hands ; but it is done every hour, and who dare ask, "what doest thou?" Twenty millions of persons die out of this world every year, therefore the most obstinate sceptic cannot deny death ; but in estimating the decrees of Him by whom after death we shall all be judged, it is absolutely necessary to convince ourselves how incomparable is the sacrifice by which one hope of pardon is purchased for us, and how impossible it is that any other redemption can ever be offered to man. The angels appear to have fallen but once, yet we read not of any subsequent hope held out to them.

Congregations are apt sometimes to praise a clergyman for taking "a liberal view" of Christian duty and doctrine. He gives, perhaps, an easy and agreeable interpretation to all the requirements of religion ; but a minister, being only the interpreter to man of what God himself declares, should he not beware lest the message be incorrectly delivered ? That preacher only is a true friend, who desires the good of his people even more than their good-will, and who, instead of saying smooth things, speaks the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. If a confidential servant came in his master's name, and invited us to reside in his master's house, we should feel, on arriving at our journey's end, very little obliged

to him, if it then came out that we had travelled the long journey merely on the servant's invitation, that there were conditions of admittance of which he had failed to warn us, and that after leading us pleasantly to the gate, it was barred against him as well as ourselves. The more he had flattered our hopes, the more startling to find that having advanced without a wedding garment, expecting to be treated as friends, we were to be banished as malefactors. How much better to be told from the first that there is a way, rough, difficult, and even dangerous, by which those guests must come who are actually to be welcomed, and to have it honestly, though even perhaps sternly, pointed out for us to follow. A popular preacher, who in former days addressed all his sermons to the young and beautiful, as if there were no other persons in the world, filled his sermons so full of tropes and flowers, panegyrics on human virtue, and praises of human intellect, that a Christian, conscious how little he deserved so much praise and encouragement, remarked, — "If there had been in those sermons a little religion, then there would have certainly been a little of every thing." Men could as easily make themselves young again, as make themselves holy without the supreme power of God's Divine Spirit, which can alone renew our hearts, and without which all striving against nature is like holding a weathercock with the

hand, because no sooner is the force taken off, than it veers round again with the wind.

“Thus men, too busy or too gay to wait
On the sad theme—their everlasting state,
Sport for a day and perish in a night ;
The foam upon the waters not so light.”

The name of Noah is here spelled in Verses 37, 38. the Greek manner. The fault our Lord ascribes to the antediluvians, seems not so much that they committed works of violence before the Deluge,—killing, stealing, or swearing,—as that they were immersed in worldly affairs, and regardless of God’s Holy Word. The ordinary occupations of life are not sins but duties ; yet these indispensable duties, when they engrossed the whole mind of the antediluvians, became sins. The natural man cannot duly compare the relative importance of time and eternity any more than a peasant can measure the magnitude of the stars, or perceive that the moon is larger than his own cart-wheel. The thoughtless antediluvians were entirely and inordinately engaged in pursuing gain, and enjoying luxury, as if they existed for no other end than to eat or drink ; and it is a melancholy truth, that there are still intellectual human beings, who would desire no better happiness than an unlimited power of appetite, and

a ceaseless banquet; who live to eat, instead of merely eating to live.

The reason why men are so eager in the pursuit, and so entangled in the pleasures of this passing scene is, because they do not know, believe, or consider that real and permanent world on the brink of which we all stand. As old age has no beginning, the very oldest are apt to forget that it has a very certain termination, approaching as imperceptibly and as unavoidably as night follows day. To some persons it seems like death even to think of dying, while others take so inadequate a view of its awful solemnity, that they think more about the accompaniments of death, and even of the trifling details of their funeral, than of the event itself. William of Wykeham employed the last ten years of his life in superintending the magnificent tomb of coloured marbles which he raised to his own memory in Winchester cathedral. Lady Bridget I—— fixed her whole heart, when she was dying, on the wish to be buried in a dress of green and gold, which her friends very unnecessarily changed to white and silver; and a distinguished man of science, much devoted to mechanism, when informed that an illness he laboured under was incurable, instantly sent for the undertaker, to teach him a newly invented method by which he wished to be screwed down into his coffin.

Eternity is never the further off, because men barricade out the thoughts of it from their minds by a million of trifles; nor is Revelation to be altered by those who invent an easy creed of their own, and force it to suit their wishes, like liquid which takes the form of any vessel into which it may be poured. How many believe according to what they wish, rather than in conformity to what they are told; but, for them and for all, it is a solemn consideration, that those who will not know rightly by faith now, shall be made to know by feeling hereafter the wrath of God. How awful will then be the case of those who have been too secure, or who have dared to make a jest of those judgments, which shall one day overtake the impenitent, like that deluge from which no created mortal could flee. Their vain hopes and foolish bravadoes will then become as the garments of a drowning person, which seem for a time to bear him up, yet in the end sink him more surely and deeply in destruction.

An interesting story, of late though timely, repentance, was told not long since by the former humane governor of Norfolk Island. He went in person to visit one of the most hardened criminals ever transported from Britain; and the ruffian having, on the passage out, murdered a fellow-prisoner, was then under sentence of almost immediate death. Nothing had appeared at all to

melt the hardness of his nature, and the benevolent Christians who had come on a kind mission to visit him, were about to abandon all hope of his repentance, when Captain —, as a last attempt, and merely by guess, observed, in a very serious accent, "What a different end this is, from all your poor mother expected, when you sat upon her knee as a child!" The wretched man's lip quivered, the colour rushed to his face, he burst into tears, and became from that moment thankful for sympathy or advice.

"I had a mother once, like you,
Who o'er my pillow hung,
Kiss'd from my cheek the briny dew,
And taught my faltering tongue.

"She, when the nightly couch was spread,
Would bow my infant knee,
And place her hand upon my head,
And kneeling, pray for me."

At the second coming of Jesus
Verses 40, 41. Christ, those who sleep in the dust, two in the same grave, their ashes mixed, shall yet arise, one to everlasting life, the other to everlasting shame and contempt. This will probably aggravate the misery of obstinate sinners, that others, perhaps of the same age, place, capacity, employment and family, shall be taken from the midst of them to glory; while they are

deservedly left behind. Men labour and live together, even associating in the same acts of worship, yet are they subjects of two opposite kingdoms, and at death they may be for ever divided.

Who does not know, that while a whole congregation are kneeling and rising and sitting with the simultaneous exactness of a well drilled regiment, some have their thoughts astray, wandering on the mountains of a thousand vanities; while to others, the mere manual exercise is as nothing, compared to the high intellectual exercise of the mind and soul; but while those who pay no heed to Revelation, are of course occupied with many earthly affairs, even those who devoutly believe have a perpetual conflict to maintain between the passing concerns of time and the much more important, though unseen realities of eternity. The soul of man requires more than the support of nature, or like a stone it falls the instant it ceases to be held; and perhaps when very celebrated preachers become popular, with such eccentricities of manner, voice, and expression, that men have wondered how they could be listened to in spite of these disadvantages, the truth is, that such peculiarities help men to listen. Those who are on other occasions annoyed by the wandering of their attention, and sitting in a continual conflict of self-reproach on account of other subjects in-

truding, find their thoughts enchained at once by the very oddity of the tone or the manner; every eccentricity is a peg on which to hang their thoughts; they feel at once relieved of that constant battle of the mind, which, on ordinary occasions, they have to fight with their own desultory fancies. Thus John Knox, Rowland Hill, Chalmers, Irving, and many others, dead or living, who drew extraordinary crowds, were not only men of remarkable talent, but remarkable also to a pitch of eccentricity in manner, in voice, in accent, and in their picturesque and extraordinary expressions, which relieved men of all the usual difficulty in listening, by making it impossible not to observe every look and word, not to remember every strange illustration or assertion.— During the reign of James VI. an extraordinary and very startling degree of plain speaking became customary from the pulpit, which was never intended to be the vehicle of personality. Soon after the cruel murder of “the bonnie Earl of Moray,” the Rev. Mr. Simpson preached before His Majesty on the text, “Where is Abel thy brother?” and openly remonstrated with the King for not punishing Huntley the murderer. “I assure you,” said that zealous divine, “the Lord will ask at you, where is the earl of Moray your brother?” “Mr. Simpson,” replied His Majesty, before the whole congregation, “my

chamber door was never locked against you ; ye might have told me in secret anything you thought ! ” “ Sir ! ” answered the uncompromising minister, “ The scandal was public ! ”

On another occasion, King James, who was fond of displaying his biblical knowledge, interrupted a clergyman who was preaching in the High Church, and being dissatisfied with his doctrines, exclaimed, “ What Scripture have you for that assertion ? If ye prove it by the Bible, I will give ye my kingdom ! ”

God only knows how to separate between the precious and the vile, the gold and the dross in the same lump, between the wheat and the chaff on the same floor. Those mills here alluded to, are still similar in the East to those of ancient times, requiring two women to turn them ; and the labour being very severe, is generally laid upon the lowest menials. At Ramla there is now a grinding mill in use precisely answering this description.

The restless desire of happiness implanted in man’s soul, is the great engine by which God would draw it to himself ; and a true Christian must not only watch the signs of the times, but also the working of his own heart, especially while living among others who are carelessly negligent. If a man die a bankrupt as to this life, it matters nothing to him

when gone ; but a bankrupt in religion had better never have been born ; and let each individual reflect that in the space of forty, or at most fifty years, but probably much sooner, he shall be summoned to give in his account, which is to remain ever after unchangeable. Though the time be doubtful, the thing itself is sure ; for the only event certain to mortals is death. May these words of Christ, therefore, sink deeply into our hearts, never, never to pass away.

Verse 43. If the master of a house had notice that thieves would come on such a night, and at such an hour, to make a felonious attempt upon his house, though it were at midnight, when he felt most wearied and sleepy, yet would he not be up and listening to every noise in every corner which indicated the intruders' approach ? Thus, then, we have each a house to keep, in which is laid up all we are worth ; but if Death when he comes, find us careless and unprepared, our house shall be broken up, and we must lose all, not as by a thief, unjustly, but as by a just and legal process.—When that cruel persecutor, the Duke of Rothes, was dying, he hurriedly sent for one of those Christian ministers whom he had been so ready to maltreat ; but he was brought too late, as the dying penitent lay beyond the reach of comfort, and the scene of his remorse was so terrible, that most of his friends hastened in

horror away ; while the Duke of Hamilton, with tears, exclaimed : " We banish these men from us, and yet, when dying, we call for them : this is melancholy work ! "

" Let our unceasing, earnest prayer
 Be this, for light, — for strength to bear
 Our portion of the weight of care,
 That crushes into dumb despair
 One half the human race.

" O suffering, sad humanity !
 O ye afflicted ones, who lie
 Steep'd to the lips in misery,
 Longing, and yet afraid to die,
 Patient, though sorely tried.

" I pledge you in this cup of grief,
 Where floats the fennel's bitter leaf !
 The battle of our life is brief,
 The alarm — the struggle — the relief —
 Then sleep we side by side."

LONGFELLOW.

Verse 44. Those watch in vain who do not
 get ready : a reckoning is to be made,
 and we must have our accounts stated as well as
 balanced. Our cause is to be tried, therefore we
 must have our plea ready drawn and signed by
 our advocate, as it shall be well or ill for us
 throughout an endless eternity, according as we
 are found ready or unready. Christ's intention
 here is to show that his disciples should act as if

they were each moment expecting his return. The sentinel who stands awake and under arms at his post, is not taken by surprise, even though his enemy come in the dead of the night.

Every man is unwilling to seek that which he is afraid to find ; therefore men avoid examining themselves in the glass of God's Word when it so clearly shows them their own deformity and danger ; yet if his heart and conscience, his hope and confidence, cannot stand the scrutiny of his own partial examination, how shall they endure the judgment of God ? Yet all must be aware that shutting our eyes against a danger is no security against meeting it ; and even if the Christian seem in the eyes of others like a noble tree raising its head towards Heaven, let him, nevertheless, examine himself, lest he be too much rooted in the earth. "Alas ! " exclaimed a dying man, " why am I still so attached to this rag of life ? "

As death is to each man the end of the world, it has pleased God to make the time uncertain, that we may be always prepared ; and to him that is ready it matters little whether his Lord summon him to render up his account sooner or later. A child of ten may be as ripe for glory as a man at eighty, if both have passed the few days allotted each in a state of holy faith and devout obedience.

“ Bright days, too exquisite to last,
And yet more exquisite when past.”

Verse 46. Blessed, indeed, have been many such servants of Christ as he here describes, who were found, when death came, doing the Divine will. When Calvin was very near his end, being advised by some friends to remit a part of his labours, he answered “ What! would you have my Master find me idle ? ”—The death of Bishop Barclay, though sudden apparently as a flash of lightning, was far from being an unprepared one. While his daughter was reading to him a sermon of Sherlock on Death, his soul was so gently stolen away, that she, unconscious of any change, continued reading, until happening accidentally to look up, she had the grief and astonishment to discover that he was no more.—A very aged and very learned bishop in Scotland, who was found one morning dead in his bed, had sat up on the previous night to a very late hour studying Sutton’s “ How to Die.” It appeared as if in his last moment of consciousness he had been aware of his approaching end, as he had drawn the sheet over his face, and to intimate the faith in which he died, his corpse was found with the arms folded in the form of a cross over his breast.

“ Even such is Time ; that takes on trust
Our youth, our joys, our all we have,
And pays us but with age and dust ;
Who in the dark and silent grave,
(When we have wandered all our ways)
Shuts up the story of our days —
But from this earth, this grave, this dust,
My God shall raise me up, I trust.”

SIR WALTER RALEIGH, *written
the night before his execution.*

Next to the honour of those who die as martyrs for Christ in the field of battle, is the honour of those who die in the field of service, ploughing, sowing, and reaping for Christ. Men have all got a work to do, and are all more or less indisposed to do it. They would have preferred, had the Gospel repealed the sentence that all things shall be full of labour, and had it proclaimed a final emancipation from all exertion, turning this world into a merry playground, or into a luxurious dormitory ; but still the Christian, like a weary traveller discouraged by rough roads and tempestuous weather, comforts himself as he advances, with the thought of a welcome at home. The Gospel may indeed be said to abolish labour, as it abolishes death, by leaving the thing, but changing its nature ; for truly religion dignifies toil, and transforms labour from the drudgery of a penitentiary to the cheerful services of a fire-side ; yet for the true Christian there is not an idle day.

Even if his soul were cleansed from all blots, it must not remain a blank, but be inscribed within as well as without, with proofs of his love to God and man.

“Toiling — rejoicing — sorrowing,
Onward through life he goes ;
Each morning sees some task begun,
Each evening sees it close ;
Something attempted, something done,
Has earned a night’s repose.”

LONGFELLOW.

Our Lord displays great forbearance
verses 48, 49. by the delay of his second coming, and the Word of God is here justly compared in force and efficacy to a spiritual sword. As a sword has not only a glittering radiance to terrify the eye, but also an edge to pierce the heart, so the Holy Bible, being drawn forth by a skilful hand, darts a convincing light into the understanding, and with an irresistible edge enters the affections. Take therefore the boldest sinner upon earth, and God is able, by His Word alone, to bring the guilty man upon his knees, with fear and contrition. His penitence is not produced by combat but by discovery, not by violence or noise, but, as by the sun, rising, to dissipate all remaining fog or darkness.

Those who fail to prepare for that certain event, the second coming of Christ, are practically disbe-

lieving it; but our putting off the thought of Christ's advent, cannot delay the event, which to careless or secure sinners will at last be a most fearful surprise. No one need perplex his mind with conjectures when our Lord is to appear, any more than with guessing when he is himself to die, which terminates his own probation, as thoroughly as if the day of judgment were the day of his death. Too many occupy their time in seeking to live long, instead of seeking to live well, in the last of which all may succeed, and in the first very few; but there is a time for all things, and ample time, if rightly used. We see that even the animals must do their work at the proper period, or their opportunity escapes. A bird must build its nest in the spring, and a bee must gather its honey in sunshine, but if these works are delayed till winter, they never can be done, and worldly men in the making of a bargain, know that the time must be taken when it can be secured. Every sinner too has time for repentance, and has received sufficient legal notice given, whether taken or not; therefore those who have slighted the warnings of Holy Scripture, silencing at the same time those of their own consciences, concerning the judgment to come, cannot expect any farther warnings. How truly was it said that hell is "The truth seen too late."

Such is the nature of those maladies which

separate the soul from the body, often lulling the senses asleep, again racking the whole frame with agony, and frequently leaving scarcely an interval between the first seizure and final dissolution, that to reckon on the season of illness for preparation to die would be no wiser than to put off preparing money to discharge a debt until we are summoned to pay. He only who likes the wages of death should persevere in the work of sin, for sin and death are so united, that the one would not exist without the other. The workman must assuredly receive what he earns, but as all men hate death though they love sin, let them beware, lest in viewing their own hearts and lives, they prove to be fuller of sins than the firmament is of stars, or the furnace of sparks.

Death cuts off a good man, like a
Verse 51. choice bud, to be grafted into a better stock; but he cuts off a wicked man as a withered branch is cut off, to be cast into the fire. To the true Christian this world is a heaven upon earth already, of peaceful hope, and universal benevolence; but there are others, on the contrary, of so uncontrolled and irritable a disposition, that even in this life they seem fitted only, like salamanders, for the fire,—as if this world were too happy, they must fill it with jarring discords. They enjoy a continual heat of contention, their tongue becomes the severest instrument of

torture to all around, and the very breath they draw seems to inflame them. So great is the bitterness of some persons' nature, that every trifle kindles it to wrath ; and woe to him who is, by unavoidable circumstances, connected with them ; for, sooner or later, the evil passions, like an imprisoned flame, burst out when least expected, and with an appalling fierceness that will not "burn itself to rest."

If there be any one who disbelieves in the existence of such natures, let him be grateful to God for his ignorance, and pray that it may always continue.

It might be taken as an evidence of this being an evil world, that the greatest joy is so soon overmastered by the smallest sorrow, and that any one can, at any time, cause pain or annoyance to others, but the opportunities of giving pleasure are comparatively few. We can raise anger in an instant, but we cannot always, after years of assiduity, cultivate affection. Any one can make himself hated, but few can make themselves loved ; and the attachment of years may be obliterated in a moment, but the discord of an hour is remembered for ever ! The Christian must be amiable as well as religious, for the Bishop of —— was not far wrong when he said that "temper is nine tenths of Christianity." We

might as well expect the most delicate exotic to thrive in a hard frost as religion to exist in a disposition where turbulent passions, pride, intolerance, or anger prevail; but if, among a Christian's connexions, the intolerance of a bad disposition must have vent, and if the closest ties of nature be ruptured for the most insignificant pretexts, let him be consoled that, as all things are to work together for his good, perhaps enemies are more immediate instruments of improvement to the soul than friends. He may meet with individuals whose remembrance of all his affectionate good offices is cold as an echo from marble, who seem only to breathe in a quarrel, and, like a rabid dog, have no object in view but to bite and devour those nearest himself; yet the disciple of Christ can check his own irritation by considering that, in every quarrel, the person least to blame is ever the most ready to be reconciled, and fears only the danger that he might be called from this world in the heat of contention with a perverse adversary; knowing how unfit, in such a state, any irritability would render him to appear in those calm and peaceful regions, where nothing but kindness and good-will shall enter. If, then, the Providence of God has, for wise, though inscrutable reasons, mingled among the connexions whom a Christian most loves, those who seem only thrust in, like a wedge, to make

divisions where they should have been a link to unite them; who are ever on the alert to misinterpret and to misrepresent him; who obliterate in an hour the good offices of years; who forget every kindness, and exaggerate every omission; who would, if possible, force discord to arise between himself and those dearest to him on earth; and who, in their unprovoked and unaccountable malice, rob him of the duty and affection due to him from those they can influence, still, however lacerated his feelings sometimes by meeting with unprovoked rancour and flagrant injustice, he must look to God and not to man, satisfied that all is well here, because all is to be rectified hereafter,—that though variance be thrust upon him, he has ever been the last to quarrel and the first to forgive, — and that, while seeking for himself an entrance into that everlasting state where only the peace-makers shall enter, he is ready and willing to pray that even the peace-breakers may see their error, and be reconciled in this life to man first, as a necessary preliminary to their reconciliation with God. He who forgives first, wins the laurel.

A true and steady friendship, founded on principle, is the flower of all earthly pleasures; but, in most cases of human attachment, there are still many thorns; for, with the kindness to be enjoyed, there are the humours to be endured.

Too many characters allow in themselves the noisy irritability of the wasp, rather than imitate the quiet dignity of an elevated spirit, shrinking in silence away from all that can injure or disturb him; but the Christian, even when slandered, will find his best shield in living so that no one can believe the allegations against him.

“Submit yourself to God, and you shall find
God fights the battles of a will resign'd.”

BISHOP KEN.

Those who cherish in themselves any malevolence of feeling, if they have a Bible, seem never to have read that text which enjoins us to “live peaceably with all men.” It is very singular that religious differences occasion the bitterest animosities, when pity would be more appropriate than anger towards those who have the misfortune to believe erroneously, and who, like those with no ear for music, or no eye for painting, remain deaf and blind to the charms of religion.

It was a strange incident in Scottish history, during a period of religious anarchy that prevented the most peaceable from living at peace, when, by order of Charles the First, the Marquis of Hamilton arrived in the Firth of Forth with a large squadron to subdue the ancient Kirk of Scotland by an invasion of Edinburgh, and the old Marchioness of Hamilton, the commander-in-

chief's own mother, rode on horseback to Leith, at the head of an armed troop, carrying pistols at her saddle, and threatening to kill her son, the marquis, with her own hands ; for which declared purpose, her pistols were said to be loaded with balls of gold.

“ When O, so fierce the contest burns,
Good Lord, no more delay ;
O yield not to their deadly foes
Thy people for a prey.”

Hymn of the Primitive Church.

If a Christian find it impossible to preserve unity, let him ascertain that the alienation arises only from the rancorous disposition of others, and then, indeed, he may be at peace in his own conscience, however disturbed in his comfort. No men are so insignificant but, like gnats, they can sting ; yet he who suffers from their venom cannot help himself, and must learn to believe, like Diogenes, that “ our life requires either faithful friends or bitter enemies.” Any man would avoid going out in a hurricane, but if the hurricane overtake him, he cannot escape its bluster ; or if an enemy throw stones at him, the fault is not his, provided he gave no provocation. Of all plants that grow upon earth, none is more contemptible than a nettle or a bramble, and their

universal doom is to be rooted up and burned. When Wishart, the Scottish martyr, escaped from the first attempt on his life by Cardinal Beaton, he said without rancour, "I know I shall end my life in the hands of that blood-thirsty man : I know assuredly my travel is nigh an end."

"I come, I come, at Thy command,
I give my spirit to Thy hand;
Stretch forth Thine everlasting arms,
And shield me in the last alarms."

LOGAN.

CHAP. VIII.

“ Millions of pilgrims throng those roads,
Bearing their baubles, or their loads,
Down to eternal night :
—— One humble path, that never bends,
Narrow, and rough, and steep, ascends
From darkness into light.

“ Is there a guide to show that path ?
The Bible ——, he alone who hath
The Bible, need not stray :
Yet he who hath, and will not give
That heavenly guide to all that live,
Himself shall lose the way.”

J. MONTGOMERY.

MATT. XXV.

As the buzzing of a gnat in its busy idleness appears contemptible compared to the silent majesty of an eagle soaring noiselessly in its noble flight, so the busy flutter of worldly men, surrounded by all the splendid mockery of greatness, is utterly insignificant compared to the quiet dignity of the Christian’s course, resigned to the will of God and prepared for the worst.

When a brave knight, during the reign of Charles V., was led to be executed for rebellion, he loudly expressed the most vehement indignation ; but his pious companion, about to suffer at

the same moment, calmly said, “Yesterday was your opportunity to display the courage of a knight; but to-day, it is to die with the resignation of a Christian!” Thus, in a religious course, there is a time for all things, as well as a necessity to be calmly prepared for all events; and as the voyager, during even the most prosperous voyage, silently trusts in his pilot, how much more does he look to him in a storm.

Towards the close of the foregoing
Verse 1. chapter, our Lord, having made a gradual transition from describing the events awaiting the Jewish nation, to the general concerns of death and judgment, he now, in this parable of the ten virgins, more directly enforces the need of constant vigilance. The marriage relation, being the most tender and lasting on earth, is always taken in Scripture as an emblem of our Saviour’s union with his redeemed followers; and no people honoured the marriage state more highly than the Jews, on account of the hope it gave them to become ancestors to their expected Messiah.

At a Jewish marriage, the engaged parties were betrothed six months before they were married; and on an appointed day, the bridegroom went out, always in the evening, with state and ceremony, to fetch home his bride by the light of lamps. They very much resembled flambeaux, being made by winding rags round pieces of iron,

hollowed to contain oil, and fastened to wooden handles. They were carried by the bridesmaids, to do the bridegroom honour, and to do him service. These attendants were never fewer, it is said, than ten ; for the Jews always had that number present at every ceremony, either in holding a synagogue, keeping a passover, or celebrating a marriage.

The sacred ceremony was usually performed on the banks of a stream out of doors, after which the newly married persons were escorted in a palanquin, carried by four persons, to the bride's former home in her father's house, where a feast was held for seven days. Then, at length, the bridegroom conducted his bride with great splendour to his own house in the evening, when, besides the many friends and relatives who followed, another company issued from the bridegroom's home, to welcome them, who, not knowing the time exactly when the procession would move, went out early sometimes, and waited by the way.

The ceremonies of a Hindoo marriage now, very nearly resemble all here described, but the custom of crowning the bride has been discontinued at Jewish weddings from the period, according to tradition, of the fall of Jerusalem.

Even the foolish carried lamps ; that is, they exhibited just as much religion as was necessary to

make during life a plausible appearance, and would have been greatly offended had any one questioned their sincerity ; but nevertheless, their hearts were not truly sanctified and stored by the Spirit of God with holy affections. If such persons imagine themselves perfect, they will no more think of amendment than a traveller, who conceives himself at the end of a journey, will think of advancing farther.

The danger of delay in our spiritual concerns has been testified in a most interesting manner, by the narrative, lately published, of an eminent clergyman. He mentions, that being in company with a young man who seemed deeply impressed by some remarks on the importance of religion, he turned to him with an exhortation immediately to consider the concerns of his soul, when his young auditor replied that, being about to gain admission into a mercantile house at Birmingham, his whole prosperity for life depended on devoting every instant to prepare himself, but in a few months he promised to try that course of reading and prayer which his kind monitor recommended. The clergyman felt at that moment how easy it is to impress a man, that it is more difficult to convince him, and impossible, without the especial aid of God's Holy Spirit, to convert him ; but he represented to the young man how uncertain life is, and that perhaps he might not live to realise his

good intentions. All he said was in vain ; for the young inquirer after truth maintained, that he had no time at present, and would have abundance of leisure hereafter. They then parted in a friendly manner, but in truth it was for ever, as the clergyman records that within one month his young friend was buried.

All the ten fully intended to meet the bridegroom, but while the foolish virgins were like those tradesmen who set up without any stock, the wise had provided oil. The Christian's vessel is his heart, wherein he bears about all his thoughts, intentions, and wishes, so that he is inwardly furnished with good principles, besides holding out the external lamp of profession. Thus in temporal things, the wise do not defer their preparations : but if sick, they send at once for physicians ; if in debt, they provide the means of payment before it be called for ; and if expecting an office or a benefice, they diligently pursue that course of study which shall qualify them to hold and keep it.

Perhaps when the wise virgins slumbered, they did so under the peaceful consciousness that being ready for a summons, wearied nature might enjoy that repose which mortal infirmity requires ; but between our conversion and the call to appear before Christ, a space elapses, during which many real Christians as well as hypocrites may be found

occasionally unwatchful. It is sad to know that one great argument against Christianity has been founded on the character of individual Christians themselves; and let each solemnly beware, lest in conduct, or even in mere manner, he should become the means of repulsing an unbeliever from the narrow road along which all who love God and men would desire to entice even an enemy, and how much more an erring brother? Who would not mourn with his whole heart to think, that to a single human being he had been himself the means of making the broad road broader that leads to destruction, or the narrow road narrower? The difference between Christians and unbelievers consists too often in the state of their internal minds only; but the summons of death excites in all very earnest inquiries respecting the state of the soul. When the excellent Baillie of Jerviswood, a martyr of whom Bishop Burnet speaks in the highest terms, was condemned to be hung on the very same day he was tried, he said “The time is short, the sentence is sharp; but I thank God, who has made me as fit to die as you are to live.”

It is not enough to be in good company, for the foolish virgins were associated with the wise; nor is it sufficient to be thought well of by our companions, for people sometimes canvass the good opinion of those around, as if their admission to

eternal felicity were to be carried by vote. There seem to have been no suspicions of these foolish virgins; and thus too many like them think it enough to seem pious, without being really holy. The hypocrite imagines that anything may serve, provided only it serve for the present hour, but when such men come to die, and most want support, the spark goes out, leaving them in darkness and despair.

There is no buying when the market is over; and numbers are sadly convinced at last of this mistaken heedlessness in being satisfied to appear righteous before their neighbours among whom they are now in the habit of conversing, without taking due care to recommend themselves to Christ, at whose tribunal they must hereafter be judged, and as no one can hit the mark with a shaking hand, no more can he reach the point of safety with a vacillating spirit.

Who does not frequently declare that time is short? yet how short no one dare venture to say; while, nevertheless, inconsistent Christians never earnestly apply, till the eleventh hour, to ministers for prayers and spiritual assistance in their dire extremity. How, then, could their unpurified souls reflect the light of Heaven, any more than a muddy ditch could reflect the bright colours of a rainbow. It is not many years since a plausible man of the world, being suddenly

seized with an illness, of which he died in half-an-hour, knew no mode of addressing his Heavenly Father but the Lord's prayer, which had been one of the lessons of his childhood ; he therefore continued repeating it, over and over and over again, with almost frantic eagerness, and utterly regardless of all bodily suffering, until at length his lips were frozen by death.

Though in judging of ourselves we should solemnly remember how strait is the gate to everlasting life, and how few shall find it ; nevertheless, in judging of others, it is most consolatory here, to notice that Christ represents in this case, the number of the wise and of the foolish to be equal, consequently we are permitted to take a bias towards the charitable side, in estimating the number that shall be saved. Too many find a strange pleasure in aggravating the faults of others, as a pretext for hating or despising them, and to indulge in the pleasure of self-comparison ; but here let us observe that the wise virgins did not upbraid the foolish with their neglect, nor boast of their own foresight, nor torment them with suggestions tending to despair, nor tell the sufferers that they "richly deserved" their fate. No ! the wise were compassionate in giving their best advice and sympathy, as all mortal beings, whatever be the disparity in any respect, should be ready and happy to do. It is pleasing to

reflect that as the Gospel commands us to feel for the misfortunes of others, it permits us certainly to mourn for our own, though in doing so, we must proportion our sorrow to this consideration, that, as the greatest good is moral good, the greatest of all evils is moral evil.

The ten virgins all without exception slept. Even the best, we perceive, had slumbered, but the difference was, that they kept their lamps burning, though they did not keep themselves awake. They were not ignorant or careless of danger, but having made their preparations and set their house in order, it is the happy privilege of even the most devoted Christians to enjoy a calm tranquillity.

It was a remarkable circumstance in Scottish history, which has frequently been chosen by artists as the subject for a picture, that the good Earl of Argyll, an hour before his own execution, composed himself into a tranquil sleep ; and when the officer of state came into his cell and found him so, he rushed home, vehemently exclaiming, “Argyll, within an hour of eternity, sleeps as pleasantly as a child !”

Christ delays His coming, but nevertheless He will come at last. Though slow, every Divinely appointed event is sure ; and even those best prepared to meet the summons of their Lord, will have diligent work to do, that they may be ac-

tually ready. Thus the wise virgins had to trim their lamps and to supply them anew with oil, putting themselves, with assiduous expedition, in a posture to receive the bridegroom; and Christians, when death approaches, must seriously apply to dying work, renewing their repentance for sin, and their thankfulness for the terms of salvation. They must bid a final farewell to the world also, accompanied by the most fervent desire in a last hour, to do all the good which is possible among those who remain behind, in respect to both their temporal and spiritual interests. An external profession of Christianity may carry a man far, but it will not carry a man through; it may light him along this world, but the damps in the valley of death will put out such a mere temporary lamp. Then the hypocrite's hope becomes like the spider's web, like the giving up of the ghost, like Absalom's mule that left him in the oak.

He that would be saved must have grace of his own, as no other can muster for him. His piety must be constantly in exercise too, for though the heart be ever so accurately tuned, the smallest trifle puts it out of tune again; and even if laid aside for the shortest period, it needs rearranging, before the scholar can play his lesson on it correctly.

There is a necessity, even after the Christian

has been savingly converted, for daily and hourly penitence, even as Naaman, though he at once washed the leprosy off his body, would be obliged nevertheless daily to cleanse the ordinary defilement off his hands. As no man willingly defers his pleasures, no more should he postpone his duties, or he may be so hurried away when summoned to judgment, that time shall be left him to repent only of this, that he did not repent in earnest before; and could any sinner wish a greater misery to his worst enemy than he thus inflicts on himself in his latest hour,—vehemently to desire what he is never to obtain, and thus in truth to pass from one hell to another.

How often do men mistake their own case by imagining if they were in such a place, or had such a degree of power and opportunity, they would perform great achievements in virtue, but meanwhile neglect that little to which they are called. Such thoughts evince the sickly humours of our minds, as invalids would continually change their bed or posture, thinking thus to become better; while, on the contrary, a staid mind applies to the duties of its own station, calmly promoting the glory of Him who placed it there, and reverencing His wisdom in doing so. Though we derive benefit as well as pleasure from communion with other Christians, whose faithful prayers may now redound to our advantage, yet each individual

must be sanctified in himself, and can no more borrow the place given to another, than he could borrow his health and his eyesight, or breathe by proxy. The best of Christians must borrow from Christ, but have no sanctification to lend ; though in the Popish Church, they cashier this plain injunction to individual holiness, by maintaining that there is laid up by the Church a treasure of good works, actual deeds of supererogation, the overflowings of merit acquired by those who are imagined to have done more than their duty, for the benefit of those, like the foolish virgins, who have no oil. By paying what we owe, do our creditors become our debtors ? no ! and the greatest of rivers which rolls into the ocean, only restores to the sea its own waters. Can any intelligent man read his Bible and believe, that frail and erring mortals as we are, there has existed one single mortal since the creation who ever lived for a single day up to the standard of that perfect model which Christ has left for our admiring imitation ! The more we compare that example with our poor and sinful imitation, the less shall we be inclined to retire within the closet of our minds to admire our own excellences, and the more ready shall we be to consider ourselves unprofitable servants ; too thankful for a pardon, but how undeserving of a reward ! The learned Tertullian said he felt as if born for nothing else

but to repent, and we owe to God every inch of our time. What would an earthly parent say, if the most dutiful of his sons were to request, that on account of his great merit in doing his own duty, the son who was disobedient and rebellious might be taken into favour, and the black roll of his offences be blotted out? or would it be any plea for the preferment of a subject before his monarch that he had not deserved the pillory, and had the great merit of never having been a malefactor?

That pleasing poet, Gambold, took a very humble and Christian estimate of his own merits when he left the following epitaph on himself:—

“ Ask not, who ended here his span ?
His name, reproach, and praise, was — **MAN**.
Did no great deeds adorn his course ?
No deed of his, but show’d him worse :
One thing was great, which God supplied,
He suffer’d human life — and died.
What points of knowledge did he gain ?
That life was sacred all — and vain.
Sacred, how high, and vain how low ?
He knew not here — but died to know.”

How vainly do men dig and rake in a garden unless they plant the best seed ; and thus the hypocrite’s hopes, when realised, appear only to be vanity ; yet when he discovers this, it is not to his old companion, careless as himself, that he

applies for advice, but to those whom he lately despised, and whom he perhaps ridiculed as too precise or too superstitious. To them, in the agony of his remorse and alarm he says, "I am utterly unprepared to meet the Lord!" He has advanced in sin, like a child on the margin of a river, who playfully ventures in one step, then laughingly follows it up with another, and so heedlessly proceeds, deeper and deeper still, when at last the torrent overwhelms him with sweeping force, and hurries him resistlessly to destruction.

So influential is a plain representation of our danger from worldly enticements and pleasures, that when the Italian orator Connecte preached once to an aristocratic audience, the ladies hurried home, and instantly burned several hundreds of their most expensive dresses.

It is a thousand to one against those who delay the great work to the last having time then to do it; and truly, if a man would not willingly be surprised even by the visit of a friend, how much less by his last enemy, Death. Getting the oil of Divine Grace is a work of time, not to be done in a hurry; but most men, like most debtors when arrested, are generally taken by surprise. In the awful confusion of a death-bed, the unprepared sinner scarcely knows what to do first. He has oil to buy when he should be burning it, and grace to get when he should be using it, and old

habits to throw off, without opportunity left to acquire new ones.

He who would have his garden loaded with fruit in autumn, must spare no pains in dressing and digging it during the spring; for he may be too late, but he cannot be too soon; and habits long formed are written on the character in indelible colours. How often the victims of Satan having nothing between them and the perfect enjoyment of all their earthly wishes,—except death;—but, as an old Divine remarks, the Devil disappoints his votaries, like the hunter who never intends that the hounds shall eat the hare. Thus an ancient Father relates that a rich old miser, in the very agonies of death, continued constantly asking “How sells wool? What price bears it?” and the clergyman having solemnly urged the dying man, for the sake of his everlasting soul, to leave off worldly affairs, he gloomily replied with his latest breath, “I cannot.”

“Did I through life, for small or great,
My own pursuits forego,
To lighten, by a feather's weight,
The mass of human woe?”

CHAP. IX.

“ If every man's internal care
Were written on his brow,
How many would our pity share
Who raise our envy now.

“ The hidden sorrow, when reveal'd,
Of every troubled breast,
Would prove that only while conceal'd
Their lot appear'd the best.”

MATT. xxv.

ROBERT BURNS used to say that he had “ scarce a friend except the stubborn pride of his own bosom,” but even that failed him at last; and all human experience proves that neither in ourselves nor in our friends can we find an unfailing support.

One of the young martyrs to Claverhouse's persecution in Scotland, who had habitually looked to God for help in every emergency, being commanded to draw the cap over his face, when three soldiers were taking their murderous aim at him, calmly replied, that he could look “ his death-bringers ” in the face without fear; and holding up his Bible, he summoned them to answer for the deed they were about to perpetrate.

trate, on the great day when all would be judged by that book.

Those—and those only—are invited
Verse 10. to Heaven hereafter, who are made ready for Heaven here; so that the Christian must beware of relaxing in diligence, remembering that a fire is as apt to go out for want of being stirred up, as for want of fuel. At this day the gate is indeed strait, yet nevertheless it is open; but hereafter it shall be shut, and then the state of saints and of sinners becomes unalterably fixed, so that those who are then excluded shall be excluded for ever. All things on earth have a time appointed; and it is too late in summer for the bird to build its nest, in harvest for the husbandman to sow his seed, for the mariner to enter his ship after it has sailed, for trees to be transplanted when they are old, for physic to be taken when we are in the act of death, or for fruit to be gathered in winter. Still it is never too late on this side of eternity for the sinner to repent, and none with the breath of life remaining are condemned to despair. It is not many years since a case of melancholy delusion occurred at the holy communion, when a poor timid woman, filled with anxiety and penitence, went for comfort to commemorate our Lord's death at church; but the number of communicants being unusually great, the consecrated wine became

exhausted at the very moment when her turn came. Seeing the cup thus empty, she imagined it a miraculous indication that she was rejected from partaking in that sacred ordinance, and hurrying away, in a paroxysm of despair, she put an end to her own life.

Hell is said to be full of good wishes,
Verse 13. but Heaven to be full of good works.

Every moment and every hour the Christian must keep himself ready, without being off his watch any day in the year, or any hour in the day ; for will not God be apt to reject in times of distress the prayers of that man who has despised His commands in the time of security ? As this parable of the Virgins is recorded to evince that we should live in a state of expectancy, here follows afterwards, the parable of the Talents, teaching that men should live in a state of work and business ; for the same command which enjoins us to rest on the seventh day, is equally clear that we should work during the week ; and those who talk of waiting till they find an opportunity to do good, may wait long enough, unless they make opportunities, which the earnest Christian will always do.

As rich men still wish to be richer, and every increase of wealth brings an increased desire for more, so should the Christian feel in respect to holiness ; that every attainment gives only added

ardour to his pursuit of more. Every mortal is so active that he must be advancing to good or evil, therefore how seriously should men consider while young, and while their habits are yet to be formed, that even independently of religious considerations, nothing in the surface of nature can be more utterly disgusting, even to the most thoughtless or vicious of mankind, than an old sinner, a broken-down sensualist, a hoary drunkard, a palsied miser, or a man of mere pleasure, exhausted in the pursuit, and prematurely wearied of himself, of his friends if he has any, and even of the diversions once an enjoyment, but now only a habit. Such a man has survived himself, and carries about with him a living death. He has laid up no recollections of a well-spent youth, to cheer his heart by the pleasures of memory or of hope ; he has secured no sympathy nor respect from those around ; and he is, as an old Divine strongly expresses it, "creeping upon all fours to hell."

A worn-out victim to *ennui* lately declared that being tired of balls, dinners, theatres, *soirées*, races, gambling, clubs and concerts, he found that nothing could be sufficiently exciting for him but a revolution ; and he set off to Paris that he might there be "supped full of horrors," by witnessing the whole tragedy of the barricades. Excitement means whatever can enable a man to forget the

heavy burden of self-consciousness, a burden which religion transforms into a positive enjoyment when the Christian “scorns delights, to live laborious days.” Worldly men fly eagerly from one empty resource to another, and it is curious to observe, when their covetousness and ambition are fully satiated, on what contemptible resources they fall back. Nero devoted all his leisure to the violin, which he probably did not perform as well upon as any blind fiddler now in the street. Commodus occupied all his spare time in practising to fence well; Domitian was equally assiduous in killing flies; Charles the Fifth in making bad watches, and Louis the Sixteenth at his forge manufacturing very clumsy keys. Thus, when men are not forced to work, they must force themselves, or inevitably feel a life-long *ennui*. — When the celebrated Narni preached before the students of Salamanca, such was the effect of his rousing eloquence, that he induced eight hundred young men to relinquish the prospects of honours or wealth, and retire in penitence to various monasteries, whilst some afterwards became martyrs under the excitement produced by that great preacher’s representations.

“ How heavily the path of life
Is trod by him who walks alone;
Who hears not, on his dreary way,
Affection’s sweet and cheering tone;

Alone, although his heart should bound
With love to all things great and fair ;
They love not him — there is not one
His sorrow or his joy to share."

Verse 14. In this parable the Master is Christ ; the absolute owner and proprietor of all persons and things, more especially of his own Church. The servants are Christians, devoted to His praise, and employed in His work ; for we must remember that our Lord keeps no servants to be idle. Whatever we receive from our Divine Master is in order to our working for him ; and every gift should increase our labours. As each individual must endeavour to be fitted for the element in which his Maker intends that he shall live ; as a fish would fear the purest air, or a child would dread the sparkling water ; so does the soul of man shrink from an atmosphere of piety, until his nature be renewed and fitted to enjoy its holy occupations.

We are but stewards and tenants on earth ; for whatever the Christian receives, the property remains vested in Christ, to be used for His service. When our Lord, therefore, ascended to Heaven, he was as a man travelling into a far country, and He departed with a purpose to be long away, having furnished His Church with all things necessary for it during His personal absence. Careless Christians, however, are apt to

grow cool, like water heated while the fire remains, but relapsing into its natural coldness when left.

A talent of silver is, in our money, 353*l.* 11*s.* 10*½d.*, therefore it was no small trust supposed to be lodged with even the most insignificant of these servants. Each person, we perceive, had one talent at least, and that was no despicable stock to begin with. A soul of our own is the one talent with which we are every one entrusted, and that should find a rational being in ample work. Surely, also, the duty of every man is to render himself beneficial, if he can, among those over whom he has any influence,— to a great number if possible, but if this be denied him, to a few, or, at the very least, to his own family. He who is useful to others, becomes a common benefit, by exerting his abilities, education, understanding, time, health, fortune, and influence in both doing good and gaining good. Christians possess these gifts of course in different proportions, but all enjoy some, and may use them as they pass through life either to no purpose, to bad, or to good purpose; and how truly characteristic of a good clergyman is this description given by one who had an opportunity of witnessing the most laborious of all existences, that of an active and consistent minister:— “He seemed to be always praying, to be always

preaching, to be always visiting the sick, always catechising, always writing, and always studying."

The wicked and slothful servant here
Verse 15. mentioned seems to have done no harm, but then he had done nothing! What a different world our's would be, if all men exerted their utmost powers to promote the useful works of industry, and the needful duties of charity! In our present state of moral trial, Christians are placed on earth, that each, in every rank, may have the power to improve or to abuse his talent of grace, his talent of education, or his talent of authority, unchecked by any voice, except the voice of conscience; but woe to him who lets his talent rust neglected in his own hand, or uses it only for his own worldly interest.

George III. exhibited a striking instance of moral indignation at the subserviency of principle to interest, when he was recommended to make Paley a bishop; and after being urged repeatedly by his ministers, he took down the learned doctor's works, to show them a passage in which Paley defended candidates for ordination in signing the thirty-nine articles from motives of mere expediency, even though not entirely concurring in them; and the king declared that such a time-serving man he could not conscientiously appoint to watch over souls.

The greater our opportunities, the stricter certainly our accountability, which no living man can escape. He shall be answerable as much for the good he might have done, as for the evil he did; for the sermons he might have heard, as well as for those he neglected; for the books he should have read, as well as for those he misused; and for the Bible he might have studied, as well as for disobeying its precepts. Those who break the laws of Great Britain, even though disobeying in ignorance, are made equally answerable to magistrates, because no man has a right to be ignorant of the law under which he lives; and those who will not enquire into the laws of their earthly monarch, or who knowing do not observe them, are as disobedient subjects as if discovered in open rebellion. How much more those who neglect that Holy Book of Life, which is given to man as the very pole-star of his existence.

Two of the servants mentioned in this ^{Verse 16.} parable did well: as soon as their master was gone, they instantly applied themselves to their business. Like a merchant, with so much work on his hands, the true Christian has need to set about it quickly, and to lose no time in making all other affairs bend before his main interest. There is much to be gained by industry in religion, and by cheerfully laying out all we have—time, talents, credit, interest, and fortune—

for its advancement ; but the careless sinner would imitate the world, though he should perish with it, and swim with the stream, though he should be drowned in it. An old Divine says, in the quaint peculiar style of ancient times, "if we could peruse the black roll of all those who have perished eternally, we should find that the generality of men are lost because they cannot eat, drink and gamble themselves into salvation."

Let it not be supposed that they who receive most are generally the most faithful, as the contrary too commonly occurs ; but our Lord thus shows that an account must be rendered of the weakest abilities as well as of those most distinguished. He who buried his solitary talent may represent those mistaken men who deem it virtue enough not to do positive evil; who swallowed gnats, though they would strain at a camel ; and who make it an excuse for laziness that they have not the opportunities of serving God which others enjoy. A self-deceiver, sometimes because he has not wherewithal to do what he positively declares that in more propitious circumstances he would do, will not perform the little he actually could achieve, and so he sits tamely down to do nothing. Those who have the least to do, frequently think the most of that little, and those who have the lightest burden, and the smallest sacrifices to make for religion, seem often

to feel as self-satisfied as if the wide ocean could be benefited by a few drops from their bucket.

Fuller says, that though reason be the pillar in a religious treatise, illustrations are the windows which give the best lights; and this parable is to prove that the returns from those to whom God has given gifts, were expected to be in proportion to the receivings; and from those to whom the Creator has given but two talents, He expects only the improvement of two. This should encourage those placed in the lowest and narrowest sphere of usefulness. If such persons lay themselves out to do good according to the very best of their limited capacity, they shall be accepted; but a consciousness of God's goodness must not obliterate the remembrance of His justice. How forcibly we are warned of this by the doom of that servant who neglected his one talent. He did not mis-spend or mis-employ it; he did not embezzle nor squander his talent, but merely hid it; yet, as a shrub looks tall and well-grown till placed beside a tree, so he was quite satisfied with the height of his own small attainments, till these were compared with his duty.

Lord Bacon compared money to manure, being good for nothing in the heap, and therefore must be spread in order to become beneficial. Those who have estates, but do no works of piety and

charity on them, who have wealth and influence, but do not use these to promote religion where they live; or ministers who have capacity and opportunity to do good, but do not exercise the gift that is in them; these are slothful servants, that seek their own things more than Christ's or their neighbours'.

A singular caution is given by Cicero, proving how entirely selfish were the motives of Heathen benevolence, wanting the ultimate object of pleasing God, which instigates a Christian to charity, however little he can reckon on gratitude from his fellow creatures. "Kindness," observes the orator, "need not be shown to the old, because he is likely to die before he can have an opportunity to repay you the benefit; nor to the young, for he is sure to forget it." We cannot but observe how much the mind of man revolts from receiving great favours. An ounce of obligation can be easily and gracefully carried, but a hundred weight is oppressive, and must on any pretext be thrown off. Those who wish to be loved may confer many small obligations but no very great one! The same individual would willingly be profuse in his thanks to a friend for a bouquet of flowers, or a basket of fruit from the garden, or for his friend coming on short notice to dine with him, who would resolutely shut his eyes against the consciousness of a real obligation, and

hate the sight of any one who had laid him under one. A clergyman will often perseveringly avoid meeting the friend who has presented him to a living; though the gift of a surplice, or even a pair of bands, would not have the same effect of producing estrangement. Some people relieve themselves by returning small favours for great ones; and flatter themselves that they had amply recompensed the kindness of a friend who gave them an estate, if they soon after sent him a box of game. The wish to do good must spring from no human motive, but from a single-hearted desire to imitate our Lord; for the harvest of gratitude to be reaped from our fellow-creatures, is, unlike other harvests, in an inverse ratio to the seed sown.

An interesting anecdote of gratitude from an unlikely quarter is mentioned in history. An eminent Scottish preacher, Mr. Dickson, being once attacked by robbers, he, with the most undaunted courage, admonished them of the eternal ruin they would bring on their souls, and exhorted them to try some safe and creditable mode of existence. Many years after this, he received a present of a pipe of wine, accompanied by a message that the gentleman who sent it, begged permission to drink a glass of it with him. The proposal being agreed to, they spent an evening together; and the stranger finding that Mr. Dick-

son had no recollection of their ever having met before, declared that he was one of the robbers, who had never forgotten his timely admonition ; and that, having immediately adopted the good clergyman's advice, he had prospered in foreign trade, and felt anxious to thank his excellent benefactor.

We shall all at least be reckoned with, what good we have got to our own souls, as well as what good we have done to others ; and certainly, even now nothing could give any man a severer foretaste of the torment hereafter which awaits a selfish, useless man, than to give him in this world a full consciousness of some irretrievable error, by which his temporal fortunes were hopelessly ruined.

The servant who had but one talent, Verse 24. asserted that our Lord demanded more than he gave his disciples the means of effecting ; and this represents the very heart of many plausible hypocrites. They are worldly minded, and murmur against God, disbelieve His promises, represent His service to be perilous or unprofitable, and complain that He requires more than they are capable of performing. Thus they confound the want of inclination to what is good, with a want of natural ability to excel. Such men as might have done better if they chose, will be condemned for negligence, as others will be for open

impiety. To do no good is to incur very serious blame; for as an old writer observes, " Those who have little more than enough of soul to keep their bodies from putrefaction, may still be sincere and earnest to the best of their very small ability."

Probably the good servants might be censured by ordinary men as righteous over-much, but Christ will give them their just characters of good and faithful according to their sincerity, rather than their success; and is it not better to be satirized for preciseness and singularity in advancing towards Heaven, than sociably to proceed along the road of eternal ruin? Hannah More relates that an ambassador's wife, when she first went to Paris, wrote to her friends to express how very painful she felt it to witness the frightful desecration of Sunday, and how she longed to escape the frivolous routine of such a life; but, after becoming accustomed to all the French levity and vice which surrounded her, she wrote at the end of a year to the same friend again, saying how truly delightful Paris had become, and how inconsolable she felt at leaving so many agreeable friends and fascinating amusements.

" Sin is a monster of such frightful mien,
As to be hated, needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar grows its face,
We first despise, then pity, then embrace."

It is curious to read respecting that best of heathens, Socrates, that when a physiognomist was ridiculed by the Athenians for describing that great philosopher as being “crabbed, proud, and ill-natured,” a disposition apparently so contrary to his nature, Socrates told his friends to forbear laughing, as the portrait was perfectly true to his natural tendencies, and whatever they observed that gave them a better opinion of him, was the conquest obtained by philosophy. Let the Christian, with still better means, try for as perfect a victory over sin.

He who has but two talents may deliver up his account as cheerfully as his neighbour who was entrusted with five. Not he who commends himself, or whom his neighbours commend, is sure of approbation, but whom the Lord commends: therefore if our Master say “well done,” we are indeed happy, and it is then a small thing to be judged of men’s judgment. It was a noble reply of one, who had no fear but the fear of God,—when the brave Colonel Gardiner was challenged to fight a duel, and answered, “I fear sinning, though you all know I do not fear fighting.” As courageous an officer as Colonel Gardiner, in command of a regiment, being challenged by an empty-headed bully whom he despised, was determined not to break the law of God in mere obedience to the customs of men, and sent a reply

to his intended adversary, saying he would be happy if the challenger put himself at the head of the enemy to meet him there! How many valuable lives would have been saved, if men had as much moral as physical courage, to brave public opinion, rather than the will of their omnipotent Creator. It is sad how many who spent their time in taverns, inflaming themselves with wine, have paid the reckoning in their blood, and even now there are numbers who need never be inquired for in their home, but in their club, where alone they seek for occupation, fame, and happiness.

“O! popular applause! what heart of man
Is proof against thy sweet seducing charms?
For e'en the wisest and the best feel urgent need
Of all their caution in thy gentlest gales,
But swelled into a gust — who then, alas,
With all their canvass set, and inexpert,
And therefore heedless, can withstand thy power?”

As is usual in the courts of princes, or in the houses of great men, Christ will promote his servants when they fulfil their duties well, and will advance to high offices all who have been faithful in lower. Thus the obedient follower shall enter into the joy of his Lord, — the joy of the redeemed, bought with the sorrow of the Redeemer, — the joy which He is Himself now in possession of, and which He had in view when He endured

the cross,— that joy of which Christ is the fountain and the centre. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, laid down as the very essence of Christianity these words, “Look only to the merits of Jesus Christ.”

Veres 24—25. The slothful servant is not called to account for more than he has received, yet he shall be judged not merely if he does wrong, but if he omits to do right. Still God does not demand brick and withhold the straw. For what we do receive, we must all certainly account, and it will not be a sufficient plea that we have made no vicious use of the powers entrusted to us, if we have neglected diligently to improve them. A Christian must not merely crop and cut his sins, but root them up, remembering that there is no such thing as a small sin; for small things cease to be small, when their effects are great, and what seems but a slight scratch, may become, if neglected, a mortal wound. A self-sufficient idler is apt to say, “I am no spendthrift of my property, no prodigal of my time, no profaner of my sabbaths, no opposer of good clergymen, nor despiser of eloquent preaching. I never ridiculed my Bible, nor satirised religion, nor persecuted good men. I am never gluttonous, nor intoxicated, nor did I ever injure anybody;” yet all this panegyric on himself amounts to no more than saying, as if

nothing more could be demanded, “ There ! thou hast that is thine ! ”

It will not do to carry religion in the heart, as fire is carried in flint-stones, but it must be warm and visible, as whatever spiritual gifts men do not use they forfeit. If this were the case in respect to worldly possessions, how actively men would look after them, yet many might in fact lose very large fortunes, without scarcely knowing it ; for are not a miser’s hoards as useless to himself as they are to others ?

“ He’s but a wretch with all his lands,
That wears a narrow soul.”

Most men will consent to be self-denying in many things, for they will probably do everything in religion but one, which is the very thing that is required as a test of their obedience. The obligation of the Divine law is universal, and he who breaks one commandment infringes all. As the breaking of one link in a chain causes the whole to fall prostrate, so in our obedience, it will be no excuse for the miser that he did not become intoxicated, nor for a liar that he had not become a thief, nor for a traitor that he was not a spendthrift ; but all must obey in every particular, or the offender becomes obnoxious to the same punishment as if he rebelled against every

one of the commandments, and has the same need of an intercessor to obtain his pardon. As a beautiful eye, or a beautiful hand does not constitute a beautiful person, unless all the limbs and features be in due proportion and harmony, so there must be an harmonious blending of every virtue to constitute a Christian; and the performance of one duty well can be no compensation for omitting another. In the affairs of a bank, if one insignificant shilling be unaccounted for, the books cannot be properly balanced; and thus if one sin, the very smallest that man could commit, be not atoned for, the sinner would be lost for ever; but Christ our Lord takes all without exception on himself, asking in return only our love and obedience. One of the early Scottish martyrs with his latest breath said, "Though every hair of my head were a man, I would die all these deaths for Christ and his cause."

Burying a talent is betraying a trust, and awful is the case of those who run through life as carelessly as if no reckoning were to be made and no judgment to follow. If the servant who kept the talent entire, and returned it safe, was nevertheless condemned, what shall be the case of those who pervert their talents? Conceive a stranger from some other world beholding how one man misuses his influence to destroy the principles of his fellow-creatures, another employs his gifts of

in the vineyard, an idle drone in the hive, and might deserve the remark made lately, by one idle lady of fashion on another, “I have never yet been able to conceive for what earthly purpose Bertha was created !”

Darkness, to which the unprofitable servant is condemned, was one of the plagues in Egypt, and for a perpetuity it would be fearful indeed! As in the dark no man can work, the infliction was a fit punishment for the slothful servant; but when a sinner begins to pray, it is as effectual a cure for spiritual darkness as if the man who wanted more light and heat should go into the sunshine. The effect of prayer in strengthening the most feeble mind was beautifully evidenced, some years ago, in the case of several boys in Perthshire, who seemed in danger of immediate death. Having climbed the steepest ascent of that mountain near Dunkeld, called “Craig-y-bairns,” they reached a cave generally considered impossible of access; but after enjoying themselves there for some time, when the moment came for descending, every heart failed at beholding from such a height the sheer precipice by which they must go down. Nothing seemed beneath them for some hundred yards but empty air, and the whole party shrunk back aghast with dismay. One of them at length turned in great agitation to the eldest boy, saying, “Niven! you

are a minister's son,— pray for us ! ” The boy knelt down surrounded by his companions, and poured forth a fervent petition for aid; their minds became gradually composed under the influence of prayer, their courage was strengthened, and when they all rose from their knees, the whole party performed in safety a descent, the difficulty and almost impossibility of which can only be estimated by those who have visited Craig-y-bairns.

Here follows, to explain the foregoing
Verse 31. representations, one of the most sublime discourses in Holy Scripture, spoken by our Lord, to describe that judgment to come, during which every man shall be sentenced to everlasting happiness or misery in the world of recompense or retribution according to what he did in this preparatory world of trial and probation. All men shall then see what only Christians now believe, that though formerly the divine glory of Jesus was under a black cloud of obscurity, His next appearance shall be in a bright emanation of glory,— not only in the glory of His Father, but in His own glory as Mediator. Christ at His first coming was arraigned as a prisoner at the bar, but at His second coming, He will sit as a judge on the bench, to try all nations and all people in every age of the world from the beginning

to the end of time. There will then be no possibility of opposition or escape, nor the slightest prospect that any one should be overlooked, or remain disguised in character and conduct. What less than Omnipotence united to Omniscience could effect this?

Such are the infirmities of the good here, as well as the hypocrisies of the bad, that now they are scarcely distinguishable by man. They could not even separate themselves, because they dwell together in the same society, attend in the same churches, and live in the same family circle; yet God shall infallibly separate them one from another, like the tares in a field from the wheat, the good fish on the shore from the bad, and the corn on the floor from the chaff. The most inconsiderable saint shall not then be overlooked in the crowd of sinners, nor the most plausible sinner concealed in the crowd of saints, but every one shall "go to his own place." Not the rich on the right hand and the poor on the left; the learned or noble on the right, and the unlearned or insignificant on the left; but one only distinction, the godly on the right and the wicked on the left. Let not sinners be encouraged in rebellion then, by the long patience of God, but seriously reflect that no anger is more to be dreaded than when, like thunder without rain, it is long suppressed.

Here the king admits the righteous
Verse 34. before him; and when a criminal is called into the actual presence of his monarch, custom ordains that it shall be to receive a pardon. The summons to come is, in effect, a welcome; and in some countries, formerly, when a judge meant to condemn any malefactor, a curtain was drawn before him, so that the culprit could not see his judge. We read in modern history that when the Duc d'Enghien, after his condemnation, implored permission once to see Napoleon, the Emperor replied, "No! If I see him, he is pardoned!"

Whoever tries to do all the good he can, may probably do much more than he expects, or will ever know, till all things are revealed; and probably the object in appointing a day of judgment may be, to account publicly for the dealings of God to man; seeing that already our omniscient Creator knows all himself which can be revealed. In the answer of the righteous, we perceive that those who most abound in good works will then be least inclined to over-estimate them, or rather they will be, as it were, surprised at the gracious recapitulation of them. Christopher of Uttenheim, a pious bishop of Basle, had his name inscribed on a picture painted on glass, which is still in that city, and surrounded it with this motto, which he desired to have continually

before his eyes, "My hope is in the cross of Christ. I seek grace and not works."

There is no salvation for any sinner, *Verse 35.* but by the free mercy of God,—no mercy but in the mediation of His Son,—no interest in Christ except by faith in Him,—no justifying faith that does not produce love,—no love to Christ which does not imply love to His people,—no genuine love to His people which does not influence a man to do them good as he has opportunity. This account of the judgment discloses the real nature of faith in Jesus Christ; which is not a mere passive assent to His advent and incarnation, not a mere presumptuous confidence in His merits, but the receiving Him as our King to rule, as well as our Redeemer to atone. This faith naturally leads to active obedience, and the absence of benevolence proves the absence or inefficiency of that inward principle on which all depends. The great criterion of character here is taken from works of mercy; and there may perhaps be more stress laid on deeds of charity done for Christ's sake than is commonly imagined. For as the smallest bud on a hedge-row intimates the approach of spring in all its brightness and glory, so does an act of Christian kindness indicate the germ of that faith which is to bear much fruit. When life has been suspended, does not the faintest pulsation give evidence of its perma-

inent revival; and is it not hailed as a promise of life from the dead.

Our Lord does not here accuse the ^{Verse 40.} condemned of having taken from the poor what belonged to them, but merely of being selfish. Omissions shall, hereafter, be the ruin of thousands! How few men, though, seem ever to pause in their career of life, solemnly to ask themselves, "am I doing all the good, enjoying all the happiness, and making all the preparation that my circumstances allow?" A good architect or artist in undertaking any great work, prepares an imaginary model, and completes the plan, before commencing the actual execution; but not one man in a thousand forms a systematic plan of his own life, or pursues it steadily from pre-conceived principle, or probably there would be fewer unhappy people in the world. Most men adopt an habitual course of life and go mechanically onwards, united indissolubly for better or for worse to a set of pleasures, occupations, and pursuits to which they are long accustomed. Such persons think less about making any revolution within their own minds, where their government might be despotic, than the most insignificant politician does of making a revolution in the legislature, where his influence cannot change an iota. The best intentions of such careless men

are soon exhaled into smoke, like a drop of water in the furnace.

How often in this life, have heedless
 Verse 40. sinners wished to depart from God and
 His ordinances ; but in that final judgment here
 alluded to, how fearful will be the doom to depart
 from Christ for ever ! Sinners who will not
 come to our Saviour for a blessing in this life,
 must depart from Him under a curse in the next
 world. Having prepared themselves as fuel for
 the fire, they are cast into it, not merely to pass
 through the fire, but to remain everlastinglly there.
 The eternal destiny of man is, in short, here
 declared ; that those who served Satan while
 they live, must go where he is when they die ;
 and those who served Christ are taken to where
 He reigns in glory, and waits to welcome His own
 redeemed. In a deep conviction of this very
 sacred truth, St. Augustine says of the Emperor
 Theodosius, that "he accounted himself more
 happy in being a member of the Church than
 Emperor of the world."

" What potentate
 Sits there ? — the King of time and fate !
 Whom glory covers like a robe,
 Whose sceptre shakes the solid globe,
 Whom shapes of fire and splendour guard !
 There sits the man ' whose face was marred,'

To whom archangels bow the knee —
The Weeper of Gethsemane !
Down in the dust, aye, Israel, kneel,
For now thy withered heart can feel !
Aye, let thy wan cheek burn like flame,
There sits thy glory and thy shame."

CROLY.

CHAP. X.

“Draw in thy beams, and humble all thy might,
To that sweet yoke where lasting freedomes be,
Which breaks the clouds, and opens forth the light,
That doth both shine, and give us sight to thee,

Oh ! take fast hold, let that light be thy guide,
In this small course which birth drawes out of death ;
And thinke how ill becometh him to slide,
Who seeketh heaven, and comes of heavenly breath.
Then farewell, world, thine uttermost I see :
Eternal love ! maintaine thy life in me.”

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY : 1580.

WHEN the empress Maria Louisa was near death, and seemed about to fall asleep, one of her attendants recommended that she should compose herself for slumber, when she replied, “ No ! I could sleep, but death is too near, and I must not let him steal upon me in that way. I have been preparing for his approach these fifteen years, and I am resolved to look him in the face, without fear or horror.” She did so, for the empress ordered her physician to give notice aloud when death was at hand, and she employed her parting breath in thanking Heaven, and blessing her people and her children.

Our Lord leaves an example of submitting to martyrdom when that sublime sacrifice becomes necessary, but not till then. Any one volunteering to die uncalled for by duty, proclaims merely his own rashness. He who ventures upon death without a summons, must endure it without a reward; for though Christ may, in mercy, receive the man, he will disown him as a martyr. In primitive times a converted girl hurried from her father's house to one of the Pagan tribunals, and there, in a paroxysm of excitement, announcing herself a Christian, she spit in the judge's face, and was immediately executed. Such an action was no more like real religion than a burning fever is to vital health, though very apt to be mistaken for it by the inconsiderate and enthusiastic.

Very different was the calm and rational resignation of Fisher, bishop of Rochester, who, being about to suffer martyrdom, in the reign of Henry the Eighth, composedly issued from the Tower, and when he, for the first time, observed the scaffold, he took out his Greek Testament, and, with his eyes turned to heaven, exclaimed, "Now, O Lord, direct me to some passage which may support me through this awful scene!" Bishop Fisher then glanced at a page, on which these words caught his eye: "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." The

martyr then instantly closed the sacred volume, saying, "Praised be the Lord ! This is sufficient for both time and eternity !"

"Ah ! happy resignation,
That triumphs in its fall ;
That seeks no exaltation,
But wins by losing all."

Christ, who had never offended God's justice, now submitted to His wrath, and He, who never dispensed anything but blessings among men, was now to endure their revilings when suffering and afflicted, that hereafter the thoughts of an afflicted and suffering Saviour might support his followers. Our Lord had often forewarned his disciples, long previously, of his sufferings ; but even after the most frequent notices of affliction, we have need still of fresh intimation. Christ's perfect knowledge of his approaching agony seems to have been a peculiarity. None of the prophets or apostles knew beforehand what they were to endure. This singularity should be meditated upon, for the dignified, intrepid courage of Jesus, in full anticipation of his unparalleled sufferings, calls for our highest admiration and warmest gratitude.

The character of Peter warns us how uncertain are impetuous feelings and vehement tumults of zeal ; for the more religious a man becomes, the

calmer he generally grows. Emotion is not the highest state of the Christian mind, for we see that there is no vehemence in the language of Christ. Transports and exultation cannot be permanent, but religion must be so; therefore, the established Christian avoids all enthusiastic wishes or intemperate words; but it is an interesting anecdote, illustrative of chivalrous impetuosity in the olden time, that so animating was the effect once on the mind of that noble knight, the Count de Crillon, when, for the first time, he heard our Lord's courage and sufferings fully described, that, in a paroxysm of indignant heroism, he started from his seat, grasped his sword, and exclaimed, "Où étois-tu, brave Crillon?"

It was a tradition of the Jews, that
Verse 5. malefactors should be put to death at one of the three great feasts, especially rebels and impostors. Thus all Israel might see and fear; but on this occasion the conspirators were awed, not by apprehension of God, but by apprehension of the common people, who heard Christ gladly, being benefited by His works of mercy and of pity.

At this period our Lord visited Jerusalem, the City of the Atonement, during the day, and in the evening returned to lodge at the neighbouring village of Bethany, in the house of Simon, pro-

bably one of those lepers who had been miraculously cured by our Lord. The reverential kindness of this woman in his house, might perhaps be meant as an expression of gratitude for Simon's restoration. Though cleansed, he was still called the leper; but Christ did not disdain Simon.

This woman, who brought the alabaster box, seems to have been Mary, the sister of Martha and of Lazarus, who, according to the custom of those days, broke the top off, and poured the contents on Christ's head and feet. Such a compliment, in modern days, would be reckoned very strange, but it was then considered the highest mark of respect. The perfume was agreeable, and the ointment itself refreshing to the head, being procured from a peculiar herb growing in India. The ointment was liquid, and the costliness of these odours we can scarcely imagine. They were applied as a finishing touch to the dress of important persons; but in the Temple two kinds were used, never, under penalty of death, to be poured on any one but a consecrated priest.

The disciples were indignant, being
Verse 8. like those who consider any one doing more in religion than themselves as undoubtedly doing too much, instead of trying rather to imitate them. Charity should teach us to put the best construction it can bear upon every action of

others, especially on those who seem zealous to do right, even though they go apparently to excess, or we may, like the disciples on this occasion, become censorious on what God approves. We only see actions, but cannot weigh them. The disciples believed Christ indifferent to every pleasure of the senses, and that therefore this expensive luxury was wasted on one who would take no delight in it ; still they might have perceived the sentiment with which our Lord accepted it, being pleased with this proof of a friend's attachment.

Nothing should be considered waste, whether time or money, in the service of Christ ; but Christians must take care that the motive of this offering be perfectly pure. As the most deformed body is adorned often by the finest silks, so men would often buy off the degrading consciousness of their guilt by distorted views of religion, and by giving gold instead of obedience. In such a spirit how frequently have men, with vulgar-minded ostentation, encumbered the worship of God by frivolous and useless decorations ! In the Armenian church at Jerusalem, which contains a congregation of two or three thousand persons, there are displayed images, pictures, gilding, tinsel, wax-candles, and thousands of ostriches' eggs dangling from the vaulted ceiling. In that gorgeous church, adorned with barbaric splendour, the people, on their knees,

kiss the walls with indescribable fervour, and pay devout reverence to the most precious relic in the convent,—the chair of their patron, St. James, the first bishop of Jerusalem.

Our Lord here commends the zealous honest service of the well-meaning Mary, whose conduct Judas, from vile motives, condemned; and, as the leading trait in his character was avarice, let misers here learn the disastrous consequences of that grovelling vice, which is like a dropsy, that continually seeks more drink, till it puts an end to the drinker, but not to the thirst. Avarice is a mean passion that creeps and begs at first for admission, but will at last command and domineer over every better feeling. It might be compared to that monarch, who was said to have got into power like a fox, and then reigned like a lion; for, truly, gold is a good servant, but a very bad master; and it may be questioned whether there be most trouble in gaining or in keeping it. There is an old saying, that no man is very rich without having been either unjust himself, or the heir to one who was so; and though this be an exaggerated statement, yet no man should be proud of his riches, lest they be golden bars across his way to heaven. The name of miser is derived from misery; and it is very strange that the most selfish man, haunted by a love of his own money, will live like a

beggar, and might vainly ask of himself the comforts which are cheering and almost necessary to his own old age.

When a philosopher was told once of a miser who hoarded enormous treasures in his coffer, but allowed himself no comforts even on his death bed, he said that it seemed no wiser than if the old dotard had collected several thousand pairs of boots and shoes, locked safely up in chests, when he himself walked bare-foot.

It is a mysterious curse upon those too fond of money, that they lose all consciousness of its use; for each man has just as much of this world as he enjoys of it. The miser who would, if he had the hundred hands of Briareus, employ them all in grasping, will not use one in giving to others, or even in spending on himself; so that if his gold were turned into slates it would make no actual difference in his personal enjoyments;—as an old writer says, “It is bad enough to meet a beggar in the street, but how much worse to have him within your own breast!” and certainly he who makes many poor by his extortions, but relieves none by his liberality, is as greedy as the sea, and as barren as the shore. When such a man appears in the presence of his Maker to answer for all the good he might have done, who would not tremble to think of the long arrear he owes to God and man!

A modern author, whose pen is always employed in the cause of humane and kind feeling, has ingeniously imagined men obliged in another world to witness, with all the sympathy such sufferings ought previously to have excited in this life, every scene of distress they could and should have relieved, while, with unavailing remorse and newly awakened sensibility, they are placed in full view of the starvation, ignorance, vice, and wretchedness which might once have been so easily relieved. Then comes the full horror of having accumulated those useless hoards which have now immersed them, like a ship sinking by the weight of treasure which it carries, into hopeless perdition.

Avarice is a vice always abused, but how very generally practised, for the greatest miser never seems sensible that he is one; and it is very startling sometimes to discover what very considerable hoards the best Christians occasionally leave behind them. It matters little then to bequeath donations for charity, drawn from money which, as it cannot be taken out of the world, must go to some one, and is bestowed frequently at the expense of relatives, whose property it, in fact, becomes by natural succession, and from whom, therefore, a legacy is in truth deducted after the testator is no longer the possessor of anything himself but a grave. All Christians, however,

should consider how prominent a feature in the catalogue of human sorrow is the disunion entailed on families by not having a distinct will, and that in preparing one it is an opportunity to make up for all pecuniary omissions.

As a modern author remarks, money is a standing miracle in its uses and effects. Money is allowed to be the queen-regent of this world, ruling fleets and armies, and what is more their commanders too; for many of the greatest and most admired heroes, authors, and statesmen have had their characters disfigured by avarice. To be rich in money and in good works is rare; and covetousness was a solitary flaw in the bright diamond of the great Marlborough's disposition, who used to show, till the very end of his life, with exultation the first forty pieces of gold which he ever gained, and which he never had the heart to spend. Thus through covetousness he lived in a state of magnificent misery even at Blenheim, and had apparently adopted the ancient proverb, that "An old man has no friend."

Sir Thomas Browne, in tracing the origin of avarice, ingeniously remarks, that when a boy receives his first penny, if he spend it on a tart he eats that, and when the brief pleasure is over repents of having parted with his money, as he has nothing left to show for it; but another who lays out his penny on a top, and enjoys it every

day afterwards, never regrets his bargain; therefore the first connects the idea of spending with repentance, and so becomes a miser; while the other remembers his enjoyment only, and, connecting the idea of spending with cheerfulness, becomes a spendthrift.

Though great wealth makes the broad road broader, and the narrow road seem narrower, yet no human being would willingly be poor. A poor man's growing suddenly rich, however, is as dangerous to the soul, as it is for a starving man to be set down to a full table; because avarice, like the tares sown in a field, chokes the good seed of benevolence and generosity. The first use a child makes of his hand is to grasp whatever he can reach; and Satan, taking advantage of this natural tendency to keep possession of all in our power, allures men onwards to the extreme love of money; but the same treacherous enemy who lays the bait to snare a foolish bird, will, when the victim is once caught, have its life for entering. If a Christian indulge the sinful propensity to amass wealth, even though he can make to himself some respectable excuse for doing so, gilding the vice with the name of a virtue, yet his prayers to be preserved from covetousness are but hypocrisy; for who would think of watering a weed while praying that it may not grow, or of stirring a fire while protesting that we wish it to go out?

Those who become engrossed by a love of money might be compared to a cup thrown into a stream which first fills and then sinks it. A strange instance occurred, some years ago, in which avarice got suddenly the supremacy over the better instincts of nature, and betrayed a wretched man into crime when he little anticipated such a calamity. A gentleman having fallen into a river, seemed on the point of being drowned, when a poor countryman, observing the accident, bravely plunged into the stream, and was about to rescue the sufferer, when he observed a valuable ring on the stranger's hand. Instantly the desire of possessing it altered his mind; and, after waiting till the unfortunate sufferer's struggles were over, he robbed the corpse of that ring so fatal to the owner, and still more fatal to him who thus preferred it to his soul.

“One master-passion, labouring in the breast,
Like Aaron's serpent, swallows up the rest.”

No one can approve of a foolish spendthrift, who very soon has his purse as empty as his head, and becomes as mischievous to society as a river which, not keeping within its own bank, does more harm than good. The judicious management, therefore, of wealth is as great and perplexing a business often to the possessor as the acquiring it; and probably those who labour in

a mine are not much busier than those who own one. It is truly said, that labour is caused by the acquisition of wealth, fear during its possession, and sorrow by its loss. In the present day it is strange to see what men bearing the name of Christians will do for money, caring only to enjoy this world and to live for themselves. There is actually at Birmingham now a regularly established manufactory of Hindoo idols ! These are exported by dozens for the misguided natives to worship ; and who does not allow that the *soi-disant* Christians who send them are avariciously betraying their Master's cause for gold ?

Our Lord takes this opportunity to say
Verse 11. that though the poor are always with mankind, He is not ; which proves that the belief of our Saviour's real presence in the Eucharist is a groundless superstition, and the moment a man ceases to consider the bread as bread, and the wine to be mere wine, he is no longer a Protestant.

It is thought that as Mary intended
Verse 12. this anointing for our Lord's burial, the women, in fact, better understood Christ's frequent predictions of his death and sufferings than the apostles did, for which they were compensated by the honour of being the first witnesses of his resurrection. Christ interpreted Mary's action as the embalming of his body, because the

doing of that, after death would be prevented by the resurrection. This homage on her part was to be remembered as if engraven with an iron pen on a rock for ever; and none of the trumpets of fame sound so loud or so long as the everlasting Gospel. Though the honour of Christ is chiefly intended in Scripture, yet the honour of His saints and servants is not altogether overlooked; and in the case of Mary we see how much more readily our Lord excuses too much zeal than any coldness.

The memorial of Mary's action was to be preserved, not by consecrating a piece of her broken box as a sacred relic, but by recording her faith and piety in the pages of Scripture. The consecrating of relics was discouraged by the most eminent of early Christians; and St. Antony ordered that his own remains should be buried in some unknown spot, that there might be no idle practices with his relics. There is, however, now at Jerusalem a relic manufactory which carries on a thriving trade, and despatches annually to Europe for sale such religious mementos as the superstitious delusions of modern Papists may still induce them to collect. Bushels of rosaries, scented beads, carved mother-o'-pearl shells, and magnificent crosses are diligently exported; but where is the precedent in Holy Scripture for any such idolatry? We are not to worship the like-

ness of our Divine Lord, but to be ourselves His likeness in character and conduct. We are not to worship His cross, but to crucify our own corruptions ; and men owe as much reverence to the manger in which the Saviour was born, as to the cross on which He died.

Those whose truly vulgar love of decoration makes them forget the noble simplicity of all God's most honoured servants would, if they could obtain the actual raiment of camel's hair in which John the Baptist appeared, probably adorn it with gold and diamonds as an evidence of their liberality and taste. This would destroy its identity, however, with the life and character of John, who disdained all the trappings and luxuries of human vanity. The grotto in which the Baptist is supposed to have been born is now resplendent with marble, gold, and silk, looking more like a temple in honour of some heathen idol, than one to commemorate the memory of that man whose only ornament was a leathern girdle, and his only food locusts and wild honey. It is worth remarking, that when the early Christians first began to observe saints' days and festivals, they did not do so in memory of the Apostles or of the Baptist, but in commemoration of the first martyrs. So great was the reverence paid in primitive times to the anniversary of Polycarp's martyrdom, that the Heathens supposed that the worship of Christ

had been abandoned for that of Polycarp; and a letter is still extant in which the Christians distinctly deny the intention of paying supernatural or divine honours to the memory of any one who was merely the follower of their adored Master, to whom alone all worship and all reverence are due.

“ Go, clothe the naked, lead the blind,
Give to the weary rest;
For Sorrow’s children comfort find,
And help for all distress’d; —
But give to Christ alone thy heart,
Thy faith, thy love supreme;
Then for His sake thine alms impart,
And so give all to Him.”

At the Holy Supper, which was, in
^{Verse 14.} its Christian acceptation, the first and most important ever celebrated on earth, only twelve human beings were assembled round the most faithful of friends, the most generous of benefactors, about to give himself to death for them; and yet, to the everlasting disgrace of human nature, one of the number was a traitor. Thus it will probably be to the end of time, that in every assemblage of Christians there are hypocrites; and on this occasion the characters of these twelve Apostles were a prototype of the whole Christian race. Judas fitly represents those who basely betray their Saviour by making a gain of

godliness. Peter exemplifies those less guilty, who are driven by fear to deny their holy profession. Thomas exhibits that slowness of belief that often ends in the soundest faith ; and John, that perfect love which casteth out fear.

Instead of turning an eye of suspicion, however, upon others, let us, like the self-distrusting Apostles, ask with anxious diffidence, “Lord, is it I ?” Learn thyself, and fear thyself. Peter did not ask, “Master, is it John ?” nor John, “Master, is it Thomas ?” but every one, “Is it I ?” How plausibly the traitor must have acted his part, that none suspected him, nor said, “Lord, is it Judas ?” Like bad money, cleverly counterfeited, a hypocrite goes through the world, not only undiscovered, but unquestioned ; yet Christ now gave the apostate to understand that he was aware of his treachery, and he thus prepared the minds of his other disciples. Such is the opinion in Holland of the necessity for self-examination, like that of Christ’s disciples on this occasion, that when the people of that country sit down to their meals, it is customary, instead of saying grace, to sit for several minutes in silent reflection. It seems, however, more suitable to follow the English habit of uniting in a short prayer, spoken by the master of the house ; though it is to be regretted that, too often, it is hastily muttered over, as if no one were concerned but the speaker. Hannah More

used to mention in her catalogue of minor immoralities, "mumbling so as not to be audible, and writing so as not to be legible."

Verse 15. Judas gives the only instance in Scripture of confessing to the priests. He had to make the first advances, for it had never apparently occurred to them that one of Christ's own disciples could be false to such a friend ; and does it not often turn out thus among seeming Christians, that some persons are worse than any man imagined possible, until temptation betrayed their long-concealed wickedness ? The priests dared not meddle with Christ in public, and knew not where, in private, to find him ; but this traitor hurried, unasked, with an offer of bringing them to so convenient a place, that, without noise or any danger of an uproar, his friend and master might be seized. Our Lord's enemies, when they had once found Christ, could kill him, but none except a friend and disciple could betray him. Thus the greater profession men make of religion, and the more they are employed in its service, the greater opportunity they have, if hypocritical, of doing mischief.

Chap. 26. The priests, probably to indicate con- tempt of our Lord, and suspecting that the avaricious disciple would now betray his master for any insignificant sum, offered to Judas only what was appointed by law to be paid for a

slave when accidentally killed—only thirty shekels of silver, amounting to about 3*l.* of our money. It was afterwards a curious coincidence, as if in bitter sarcasm on this guilty transaction, that, during the reign of Titus, a hundred thousand Jewish prisoners were offered for sale, at the rate of thirty for the denarius.

Though the priests were in extreme want of witnesses to accuse Christ, yet Judas did not offer himself, nor did the Jews tamper with him, though, if anything could have been alleged against our Lord with but a shade of proof, Judas was the most likely person to assert it. This is clear evidence, therefore, of our Divine Saviour's perfection, that his own disciple, who knew his whole manner of life, and was false to him, could not charge his injured master with anything amiss, though it would have gratified the traitor by justifying his treachery. Judas appears to have been led by no hatred of his master, nor by any doubts of the Gospel, but merely by his mean, contemptible love of gold. It is not the lack of money, but the love of it, which is the root of all evil; and Judas was in no want of either necessities or conveniences, yet he caught at the first offer, lest the next should be worse.

Judas had ample time yet to repent; Verse 16. but he continued false to his master though true to his word, seeking opportunity

effectually to betray Christ. Probably the traitor's motive for asking where the passover should be prepared, was that he might better lay the train ; while the other disciples, on the contrary, inquired that they might do their duty. During the time of this great festival no money for lodging strangers was ever allowed in any part of Jerusalem to be taken ; and probably Christ did not name the house he meant to inhabit, nor the friend he proposed to visit, that Judas might not yet be informed. Our omniscient Lord knew that his own time was at hand, but we know not when ours is impending ; and the near approach of death, that one amazing act which we have yet undone before us, and must do, should urge Christians to prepare for the mysterious end of time, and the beginning of eternity. He sent his disciples to the house ; for wherever Christ is welcome, he expects His people to be also welcome. When Christians take God as their God, we take His people as our people.

The paschal lamb was, from the earliest ages, roasted on two spits, placed like a cross ; and the order was, that a lamb should be for each household, in parties not less than ten nor exceeding twenty. Multitudes of lambs were kept for sale at the Temple, killed and flayed by the priests, who poured the blood upon the altar, and pre-

pared the bitter herbs and the sauce. Bread and wine were also partaken of at this feast.

“ He that dippeth his hand with me.”
Verse 23. The dish here alluded to was probably the bitter sauce, made of raisins mixed with vinegar and other seasonings, which the Jews intended should represent the clay their fathers were forced to use in making bricks during their bondage in Egypt.

God has established a court in every man's heart, wherein the conscience acts officially as informer, accuser, witness, and judge; so that if matters were carefully inquired into within ourselves, this prejudging would shield us from a future judgment. The popish priest wishes to supersede conscience in all these offices, and would prevent a man from acting, feeling, repenting, or confessing to God, by substituting himself as vicegerent for our Lord, who distinctly says, “ Come unto *me*.” Here Christ, immediately before he instituted the Lord's Supper, put his disciples on suspecting themselves, that all Christians might thus be admonished each to examine and judge himself, before eating of that bread and drinking of that cup, “ Am I a Judas to betray my Lord, or a Peter to repent, or a John to love much?” The last to be suspected or to suspect himself, was the first in the transgression. All

the other disciples called Jesus "Lord," but Judas does not.

When faith and humility sleep, then sin awakes; but the three questions which Philip Henry advised men to put to themselves before partaking of the Communion were these: — "What am I? What have I done? What do I want?"

Judas, the last disciple who asked if it were he, probably feared, if he remained silent, that it might excite suspicion; therefore he tried to face the matter out, as if totally unconscious of guilt, by putting the question, though he knew perfectly well his own treachery, and he could scarcely be so under the power of infidelity as to imagine that Christ did not read his heart.

We should here observe how eminently sociable were the habits of our Lord with man, while He wore the form of a man. From the hour of His baptism in Jordan, He walked on the broad paths of life, surrounded by His chosen friends and the multitude. There was no example of stern, self-satisfied solitude in His career of mercy and condescension, nor did He avoid the duties of life, but encountered them all. He frequented the highways and the market-places, giving His presence and His sympathy in sorrow or in joy, both at funerals and at weddings. During our Lord's agony in the garden, He chose that some of His disciples should witness it; and even in the hour

of death He did not die alone. It is scarcely perhaps to be wondered at, that during the middle ages, when few men had access to the Bible, false notions arose ascribing merit, which the Scripture does not, to a dronish solitude and to fanciful penances, instead of that active labour in body and mind which our Lord inculcates by precept and example. Now, when our Bibles are in every hand as well as on every table, it is surprising that the spirit and temper of our Lord's instructions can be misinterpreted, and that some men in the present day would set aside their duties as citizens and as relatives for self-appointed mortifications, aloof from the society and employments for which, under the providence of God, they were born.

Even among Protestants, it is too apt to be forgotten that Christianity is not a religion of mere negatives; and there is unhappily reviving a sentiment of admiration for men leading such a life of useless mortification as "John the Silent," a *soi-disant* saint, who passed years without speaking, and employed his time during the weary nights, as a penance, in carrying baskets of sand from one hillock to another, that he might be prevented from falling asleep. What service can such penances do to God or man? No more than if every Christian closed his shutters against the light of day, and sat in the dark. This would

be a far easier duty than to glorify God in the employments and intercourse of life.

Idleness is the rust of the soul ; and it is much more easy, like John the Silent, not to speak at all, than to speak in a Christian spirit ; while it is far more difficult to redeem the time, as Christ and His Apostles did, by mingling, on terms of friendly benevolence, in the occupations, the pleasures, and the sorrows of others, than to wear out life struggling against the wholesome necessity of eating and sleeping, which the wisdom of God has made essential to the preservation as well as to the enjoyment of life.

It is the dictate of mere blind nature, not of Divine grace, to perform such voluntary and extreme penances, for on such points a Hindoo devotee, or an Arab, will out-do the sternest self-sacrifice among European Papists. In Stephens' Travels we read of an Arab saint, held in great reverence, and to whom, when he died, a public tomb was erected, while those on whose charity he once existed now resort in crowds to pray. The description proves to what extreme degradation man may be brought by a superstitious will-worship, and by forgetting that useful labour is the price set by God and nature on every enjoyment we have on this side of heaven. " Looking down," says Stephens, " from my dromedary, I saw extended on the ground the

figure of an Arab. I at first thought he was dead, but at the noise of our approach he raised his head from a stone, which served him as a pillow. A small fence, but little higher than his recumbent body, protected him from the wind; the withered branches of the palm-tree were his only covering, and the bare earth his bed. I could not have believed, without seeing it, that anything so wretched, made in God's image, existed on the earth, for he looked like one who literally crawled on his belly and licked the dust of the earth. Before we were out of sight, he crawled back under his palm leaves, and was again resting on his pillow of stone!" If there be merit, then, in voluntary misery, starvation, filth, and idleness, who can excel this Arab, as he outdoes all those men of fabulous excellence recorded in Butler's Lives of the Saints?

There are in the Church now, men whose lives are as nearly a transcript of our blessed Lord's as the fallible nature of man, in this world of trial, can achieve, but who would be the first themselves to acknowledge that they are unprofitable servants, and the last to allow that they can ever deserve, by their own merit, the welcome promised by that Divine Master whom they so diligently imitate, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant!" Such men there are, who keep under the body by constant moral and intellectual

discipline,— who sleep and eat, not for mere enjoyment, but as a part of their duty, to strengthen them for their useful labours in the world. Without stinting themselves of needful rest, they rise early, but refreshed, and devote their first hours to private prayer ; they assemble their servants and families twice every day, to be instructed in the Holy Scriptures ; they receive, at regularly-appointed times, with kindness, all the poor who need advice, consolation, or assistance ; they visit the houses of those who cannot come to claim succour ; they endeavour to associate the influential members of their congregations in plans to alleviate the mass of human misery around ; they catechise the children, exhort the parents, console the aged, and encourage all, whether high or low, in every good word and work. Disdaining all the external sanctity ascribed to hair shirts, stinted food, painted glass, tall candles, genuflexions of the knees, finely-bound Bibles, crosses on the sermon-case, and encaustic tiles,— things childishly insignificant, except for the importance recently attached to them,— a man of God promotes, by his example and influence, the multiplying of churches and schools, and raises a perpetual monument to his own efficiency by rendering, in his parish, all the means of grace accessible to every human being under his care. By personal visitation he ascertains that these blessings are

duly estimated among those for whose everlasting welfare the faithful pastor feels almost as responsible as for his own. Such men there are, most reverenced by those who have the best opportunity to know their private as well as their public excellence, and long may a blessing attend their labours ! With deep thought and profound learning, they take their stand on the essential points of Christian doctrine, and inculcate with these the necessity of personal holiness, evidenced in assiduous attendance at public worship, to be followed up by self-improvement and self-government at home, by looking around to see what are the duties appointed to each individual, and by carefully fulfilling them. Next to what he owes to his Maker and Saviour, the Christian endeavours to perform, with unselfish and unobtrusive alacrity, all that is due to his family, his relatives, his old hereditary friends, his benefactors, and his own native country, in which, by the appointment of God, he is born, and to which he owes every feeling of patriotism and attachment ; not testified by living as an alien to the scenes or to the home in which, with unquestionable wisdom, his lot is placed, but in the faithful, conscientious, and cheerful discharge of every religious, domestic and national obligation, with deep thankfulness to God for his own existence, and for its pleasures, but still more for its duties and its

hopes. When such are the pleasures and occupations of a resident clergyman, what shall be the fearful doom of those who, having been ordained to perform them, live absent from the very scene in which they undertook to labour!—and if the Bible threaten a curse on the hireling shepherd, how much deeper shall it be on him who takes the hire and entirely neglects the labour! When Narni preached before the Pope, cardinals, and bishops at Rome, on the crime of non-residence, he painted its true colours of guilt so powerfully, that he terrified thirty or forty bishops back to their own dioceses.

CHAP. XI.

CHRISTIANS, when attempting to cultivate in their own minds a salutary thought of death, find a strange difficulty always in realising their own mortality, and so much did Charles V. desire to be impressed with the consciousness of his own approaching end, that he had recourse to the most extraordinary plan on record to bring his mind in contact with death. He ordered his tomb to be erected in the chapel of the monastery, and every preparation to be made for a funeral. The grave was dug, the coffin made, and Charles was clothed in the habiliments of the grave. In slow and solemn procession did the monks and his domestics wend their way through the cloisters into the chapel, a dim light being cast on the scene from the black tapers which each carried; after these followed Charles in his shroud. The service for the dead was chanted, and Charles joined, with agonised earnestness, in the prayers which were offered up for the repose of his soul, mingling his tears with those shed by his attendants, as if they were celebrating a real funeral,—the event which was soon to follow cast its shadow upon them. At

length he was solemnly laid in his coffin, and, all the attendants retiring, the doors of the chapel were shut, and Charles left to his own meditations ! Who can imagine the varied thoughts that must have crowded into the mind of that strong-minded and deep-thinking monarch, when thus left alone in his living grave ! Instinct with life and feeling, he there endeavoured, by a scenic representation of death, to prepare himself for the awful reality, which a few months afterwards he actually endured. No such penance is enjoined by Scripture, but a prayerful waiting for the will of God, accompanied not only by implicit submission, but by active attendance on every duty and on every ordinance of Christianity.

The law of Moses had ordained certain regular festivals, thus reminding the Jewish nation of the various mercies shown them ; and here we find the institution of that great Gospel ordinance, the Lord's Supper. All the legal sacrifices of the Temple being now summed up in the approaching death of Christ, and so abolished, the former feasts of rejoicing were likewise now summed up in this sacrament, and so abolished.

Christ called Himself " the bread of life," upon which metaphor this sacrament is founded ; but it is a mere Eastern style of expression, intended to intimate that as the life of the body is supported

by bread, so the life of the soul is supported by Christ's mediation ; as bread is the most universal nourishment, and wine the most salutary cordial to the human frame, so, in the virtue of Christ's redemption, we seek support and refreshment. Our Lord now celebrated the paschal supper called the Passover, and so, in similar figurative language, He calls this bread His body ; but Christians are not expected to imagine the bread His real body, any more than the paschal lamb was really the Passover ; nor is Christ to be understood literally when He says, in emblematical phraseology, "I am the door of the sheep-fold."

As food, when merely looked upon, if ever so well prepared, cannot nourish a man, so, in spiritual things, he must feed on the doctrines of Christ. We partake of the sun, not by having the bulk and body of the sun put into our hands, but the beams are darted down upon us ; and thus we partake of Christ, by partaking of His grace, as the blessed fruits of His body being broken. The Lord's Supper is a sign of faith and an exercise of faith ; therefore, in proportion as that faith is sincere and ardent, a blessing may be anticipated. The soul of man is united to sin by so close a Gordian knot, that it can only be divided by the sword of the Spirit.

No man who has an unforgiven enemy is fit to approach the table of our Lord ; and we read in

history a beautiful instance of conformity to the Divine will by Warburton, during his old age. He then became bishop of the same cathedral where Tucker was dean, but for many years they had not been on speaking terms. On the Good Friday shortly before Warburton's death, as they were together at the altar, the bishop, before he handed the cup to the dean, whispered, with fervent emotion, "Dear Tucker! let this cup be the cup of reconciliation!" The salutary effect was immediate, and they continued friends throughout the short remaining period of Warburton's life. Thus do good men teach the most difficult duties by example, as the most effectual way to lead on others. How often do we see a mother, who has in vain tried to induce her child to take a nauseous medicine, succeed at last by letting him see her take a part of it herself!

When Charles I. entered his name on the books at Oxford, in 1616, he added a Latin inscription to this effect, "Though all things become subject to force, be thyself subject to reason." Those who take revenge may be even with their enemy, but those who forgive him must be superior, for it is a monarch's part to pardon; yet before any Christian feels acquitted in a quarrel, let him be sure that he has at least once offered a reconciliation, and that he remains always ready for one. Those who morosely dwell on the recol-

lection of injuries, rivet them in the memory by sullen meditation, till the heat of their passion is chafed into fire; so that the anger which was at first only a slight irritation, to be smiled, or talked, or slept away, gathers into thunder, which, with a sweeping and invincible rage, scatters terror and ruin around. "Beware," says the old proverb, "of silent dogs and still water." A stern, brooding spirit exasperates his own passion, fixing with bands of iron and links of brass on the soul those resentments which a Christian would have willingly dissolved in oblivion, knowing, as all are aware, that humours which can be grappled with at the outset, grow to a headlong and unmanageable fury when encouraged, or even permitted.

How dreadful is it to think, that, in the case of family estrangements, there might exist objects of common affection deservedly beloved on both sides, around whose death-bed may be assembled a circle of mourning relatives, who, amidst the sacred scenes of family affliction, are unable to take each other by the hand with feelings of mutual sympathy, and who may aggravate the suffering of an expiring hour to the dearest and best of friends, by testifying, even in the very presence of death, that there are angry emotions where only love and sorrow should transfuse the most adverse elements into one! Let the Chris-

tian, then, search out every injury he has ever received, in order to examine whether he has thoroughly forgiven it; and if he have an enemy, however undeservedly, let him, if his own advances to reconciliation have been perseveringly rejected, still be ready to meet half-way, with cordial oblivion of the past, an extended hand of renewed amity.

Let the Christian sit down beside a spring in the mountains, and observe its gentle disturbance when quietly sending out an almost imperceptible streamlet; yet before that nearly invisible river has flowed above a few miles, it grows in depth, it increases to a torrent, it foams and wrestles amidst all impediments, it breaks the very rocks by an overwhelming power, and woe to him who should attempt to stem its rushing force. Thus if men resent every careless inadvertency, maliciously scanning the whole conversation and conduct of others, how very soon may they be borne on by the tide of angry passion to disturb a neighbour's comfort, to undermine his interest, to extinguish his reputation, or to scatter into fragments that family peace which it was his first earthly duty to preserve unbroken!

Hitherto the blood of our Lord had
^{Verse 27.} been represented by the real blood of animals; but after having been actually shed, it was represented by the blood of grapes, and all

without exception are invited to drink of it. Christ, probably, then foresaw that in after-ages there would arise a Church which would prohibit the cup to the laity, therefore He makes it now very distinct, that none of His disciples are to be excluded from the privilege. As ancient contracts were ratified by slaying an animal, imprecating the vengeance of death on either party who might fail in the contract, so the cup of communion represents the blood of the new covenant made with man. Our Lord now bids farewell to the fruit of the vine, which is the scriptural emblem of gladness; but Christ had done with joy and gladness until after His resurrection. He would not long abide with His disciples now, nor celebrate this feast again with them till a meeting took place in heaven.

“With love to man this cup is fraught,
Let *all* partake the sacred draught;
Through latest ages let it pour,
In mem’ry of my dying hour.”

Expiring Christians, like their Lord on this occasion, take a last leave of sacraments and those other ordinances of communion which with so much comfort in this world they enjoy, for they now enter on a glory and felicity which supersedes all else. Thus, when the sun rises, our candles are put out. Here Christ’s was a long, but not

an everlasting, farewell to His Apostles, as He assures them that a happy meeting should at last take place, "When I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

The solemn ordinance is closed with a ^{Verse 30.} hymn, probably that psalm called "the great Hallel," sung by the Jews on closing the passover supper. Though the disciples were in sorrow, and Christ was entering on His sufferings, yet they could sing a hymn together; and thus our spiritual joy should not be entirely extinguished by outward afflictions, as they should rather cause us to be heard the more in both praise and prayer, so that our griefs shall act like the weight in a clock, which causes it to be heard.

Christ now retired to the Mount of Olives. Our Lord would not stay in the house to be apprehended, lest He should bring the master into trouble; nor would He stay in the city, lest it should occasion an uproar; but He retired to that same hill where David in his distress went weeping. Christ and His disciples, on this occasion, had the benefit of moonlight for their walk, as the passover was always observed at full moon.

" The Lord of light, though veil'd awhile
He hides his noontide ray,
Shall soon in lovelier beauty smile,
To gild the closing day ;

And, bursting through the dusky shroud
That dar'd his power invest,
Ride thron'd in light o'er ev'ry cloud,
And guide you to his rest."

BOWDLER.

It is good, after receiving the Lord's
Verse 31. Supper, to retire; and we have here
Christ's discourse with His disciples, as they as-
cended the Mount of Olives. He foretells a dis-
mal scattering storm, when His most beloved
disciples would be all so terrified by His sufferings,
that they could not have courage to remain faith-
ful. Christ had lately disclosed to the Apostles
the treachery of Judas; but the rest were not
encouraged to feel secure. Though there shall
be but one traitor, all might be deserters!

How instantly a storm may arise, and what
important events may be comprised in a very few
hours! When Christ fell into the hands of His
enemies, the Apostles fled like a scattered flock,
each to shift for himself; and happy the disciple
felt who could escape farthest from the cross. So
feeble is the heart of man, so ready to trust in its
own strength, and so gracious is our Lord, who
gave Himself to be smitten for the flock which had
forsaken Him; and who even returned afterwards,
not only to seek them out again, but, as the captain
of their salvation, to rally His troops.

How many, like Peter, spread out the
Verse 33. sails of their Christian profession in a
calm, but furl them as soon as a storm arises !
This Apostle's great self-confidence, and readiness
on all occasions to speak, was sometimes of use to
him ; but here it betrayed him into evil. Peter
fancied that all except himself might fail ; and it is
common for those who think too well of them-
selves, easily to become suspicious of others. To
the zealous Apostle now, dangers seemed trifling,
and failure impossible. Peter knew his duty, that
he should rather die with Christ than deny him ;
but he was too hasty in promising, as well as too
slow in praying. Unswerving faithfulness is the
condition of discipleship ; and, how easily could
any man talk boldly or carelessly of death while
yet at a distance ! “ I would rather die ! ” is often
said, but not so soon done, when death in its own
ghastly colours appears ; yet this is not to intimate
that because resolutions are sometimes
broken, none should be made. Those who form
an engagement to act right, may fail to keep it
steadfastly ; but those who make none, are more
sinful still. How frequently does every Christian
resolve like Peter, and how often fall too like
him ; but he is secured from final apostacy by the
intercession of Christ. Who dare hope to need
that propitiation less than Peter !

A curious incident is related in Spanish history

illustrating the difficulty of continuing faithful to our creed in defiance of death. A nobleman at Madrid ascertained once that his favourite physician had been dragged, some days before, to the Inquisition on suspicion of heresy, and tortured there till he signed a paper confessing whatever his enemies cruelly ascribed to him ; for which he was then in hopeless imprisonment. Enraged at this act of barbarity, the Spaniard resolved, in a way of his own, to seek retribution ; therefore, he immediately retired to bed, and pretending to be dangerously ill, sent for the Grand Inquisitor to receive his last confession. No sooner did his expected visitor enter, however, than a strong band of armed attendants rushed into the nobleman's bed-room, where they seized the Inquisitor, and pinioned him. A curtain was then withdrawn, which displayed a fire fiercely burning, in which was a red-hot helmet, which the nobleman desired his assistants instantly to place on the terrified Inquisitor's head, if he did not consent to sign a paper confessing himself to be a Jew. Every objection was at once overruled by the sight of that blazing helmet ; and the nobleman after obtaining the Grand Inquisitor's signature to the confession of apostacy, dismissed him, with a solemn admonition against making bodily fear the test of truth; but well may each Christian, in anticipation of the very smallest trial, repeat that

most necessary petition, “ God defend me from myself ! ” An arrow shot at a man’s head by his enemy may miss him, but the apoplexy within is what strikes him dead without remedy ; and thus the soul can only be ruined by its own voluntary treachery to its own best interests.

It is related of a criminal, who exhibited wonderful resolution in bearing the rack without confessing his offence, that he afterwards acknowledged a contrivance by which he supported himself. He had secretly painted at his foot the representation of a gibbet, to remind him continually of the worse penalty awaiting him if he yielded. Thus should the Christian carry before his mind’s eye the cross of our Lord to encourage, and the fear of Satan to warn, him against apostacy.

“ When any turn from Zion’s way,—
(Alas ! what numbers do !)
Methinks I hear the Saviour say,
‘ Wilt thou forsake me too ? ’ ”

Hitherto we have seen the preparation
^{Verse 36.} for Christ’s sufferings, but now we enter on the mournful scene. Clouds had long been gathering blacker and blacker around Him ; but now the storm in serious earnest begins. Our Lord’s agony in the garden, as here described, was previous to his enemies giving him any trouble,—

to prove that of his own accord he suffered. In Gethsemane, which signifies an olive-mill, Christ trod the winepress of his Father's wrath, and He trod it alone. The garden to which our Lord retired, is about a stone's throw from the brook of Cedron, and may even now be found. It contains eight large and venerable olive trees, well known to all modern travellers, the trunks of which testify their great antiquity. A low, broken wall now surrounds that chosen spot where the solemn voice of our Divine Lord then sounded forth into eternity. It is sandy, barren, and desolate.

In a garden the second Adam now triumphed, as in a garden the first Adam fell. In the garden of Eden, Adam ate the fruit by which sin was engrafted into the world; and in the garden of Gethsemane, our Saviour drank that bitter cup of agony which was to redeem us. "Thus, as my sin comes from another," says St. Bernard, "why should not my righteousness be granted me in the same manner?"

Christ took with him three disciples only, Peter, James, and John; who, having witnessed his transfiguration, would be better fitted to witness his agony. Not that they would have to behold any bodily torment, because nothing had yet occurred to hurt our Lord; but the words here used have been emphatically translated, "He

began to be sorrowful, and in a great consternation." If the cup of suffering were to pass from any one in the created world, it would certainly have been from the Son of God ; but He drank it to the very dregs. In this overwhelming agony of our Lord we behold the nature of sin, and that it is not consistent with God's attributes ever to allow that man's offences shall escape with impunity. Had Christ suffered less, even then, we never could have measured the greatness of that mercy which he exercised towards mankind. If, then, our Lord not only did miracles, but suffered miracles, for our sake, what return does He require of us ?—Only one—our entire gratitude, testified by our willing obedience.

Though martyrs for conscience have endured with triumphant resignation all the torments inflicted, yet they received such Divine support as was now denied to our Lord, the Prince of Martyrs. We read of a humble disciple in after ages, Fenelon, who felt, when expiring, so upheld by Divine grace, that he exclaimed with delight, " Had I viewed only the glory of this world, I should have said to Death, when he presented to me the cup of bitterness, ' Let that cup pass from me ; ' but, happily, my thoughts are entirely occupied with heaven, and I exclaim, ' How pleasing is this cup ! ' " In 1680, when Skeen the traitor was hung at Edinburgh, he clothed himself entirely

in white, even to his very shoes and stockings, in token of his perfect innocence.

A curse had been divinely annexed to that cross on which the sins of a whole world were to be expiated; therefore, the consciousness of God's presence was now to be withdrawn from our substitute and representative. — Christ's was such a sorrow as no man could bear, and live! — If the human frame can hardly stand a state of protracted and extreme joy what must it have endured in so long and unremitting a sorrow! It gives some ease to grief, if we have a friend in whose ear we can vent our afflictions; therefore, Christ here tells His own disciples what He endures, and that his soul must be sorrowful as long as it remained in the body. There was no outlet but death! Seasons have occurred, sometimes, in the immediate prospect of suffering, when the anticipations of a sensitive mind equal the reality; and our Lord, possessing such distinct anticipations, nevertheless, wherever he went, or whatever he did, hastened assiduously onwards to that final catastrophe which should so mournfully end his life and mission on earth.

Life is the first thing that nature desires, and the last that it is willing to part with; consequently, the love that, in a very few historical instances, has mastered our strongest instinct, must immeasurably transcend that of man, in

general, for man. Some, however, have died for their friends or country ; but who, except Christ, ever died for his enemies ! When a powerful man is requested to speak merely a word on behalf of his best friend, how hesitating and backward he becomes ! If, then, so unwilling to intercede for one he loves, how very unlikely to die for him ! There are some noble and generous natures ready for any sacrifice ; but, in general, how instantly a man professes to be powerless, or in poverty, when asked for his interest or his money with which to serve another ; and how much more if his life were at stake !

Love can be only repaid by love ; but in return for such love as that of our Divine Lord, we must not only give the heart, which He asks, but let it be a heart broken by contrition, for having ever grieved or offended so benign, so incomparable a benefactor, who has permitted us to live under so long a sunshine of mercy, — a sunshine only perhaps used by us to ripen our sins. Satan treats man, sometimes, as the eagle did the oyster, — carrying him aloft on the wings of prosperity, that by letting him fall from a great height, he may be dashed in pieces, and destroyed.

In most great enterprises of toil and peril the suffering is doubtful ; and many a cheerful, though perhaps fallacious, hope is mingled with fear. Our Lord, on the contrary, anticipated fully his mis-

rable career of suffering, as well as its close of agony ; but nothing delayed His footsteps in that melancholy way of tears and blood. To all who suffered, and especially to His disciples, Christ had been hitherto the giver of consolation; but now He needed sympathy.'

Though as God Christ was prayed to,
Verse 39. yet as man He prayed; and though all things are possible to God's power, yet our Saviour asked, if it were possible to God's justice for man to be pardoned, and the bitter cup to pass from Himself, that it might be so. Had it been consistent with the justice, truth, and mercy of Almighty God to remit the sufferings of our Lord, He would as much have desired it, as human nature in such circumstances naturally might; for Christ had, in the most intense degree, every innocent feeling of our nature. As man, the Saviour feared death; but as God, He adhered to His purpose.

Christ's subsequent retraction of that prayer for the cup to pass from Him should fill our hearts with boundless gratitude, that, in an hour of such trial, He never cherished a thought of abandoning us to the fate we merited. Unless God could be glorified, man saved, and the purpose of our redemption answered, without His drinking of this bitter cup, Christ desires not to evade the suffering. What the Christian cannot do without

losing his great end, should be reckoned in effect impossible ; and Christ our Lord did so.

Because this was His Father's will, Christ did what He did, and did it with delight. In conformity to that example we must drink of the cup that God puts into our hands, be it ever so bitter ; and who that received an efficacious medicine from a faithful physician perfectly acquainted with his case, would cry out that he was poisoned ! Though nature struggle, yet let grace submit ; and in all our sorrows let us remember that we are circumstanced as Christ was on earth, in order to prepare us for being as He is now in heaven. If we are to receive the whole tree of life with its fruits, let us not repine, then, that a few leaves are permitted at first to fall in the storm.

Christ repeated this prayer three verses 42—44. times ; but, on the second and third occasions, having ascertained that the cup, in all its bitterness, was necessary, He no longer asks that it may pass from Him. Thus, prayer should be not only the offering up of our desires, but of our resignations to God. The answer to Christ's prayer was not the removal of His sufferings, but that He was strengthened neither to fail nor to be discouraged. We should here observe, what a constant mixture of holy retirement and of active benevolence, alternating like night and day, the whole life of Jesus was.

What are the best of men, if left to
Verse 41. themselves! Here the disciples fell
asleep during the agony of their friend and master.
How carelessly indifferent of them! yet there are
certainly cases where people sleep for very sorrow;
and it is even a well-authenticated fact, that
criminals sleep soundly, in general, the very night
previous to their execution. The remonstrance
of Christ, that they could not watch one hour, is
not meant as any mitigation of sin; but He adds
a solemn injunction to additional prayer and vigi-
lance in this life of continual temptation; like a
man expecting a blow, who will therefore be in-
cessantly on his guard against it. How happy for
man that Christ has learned, by what He himself
suffered in our frail nature, to make allowance for
its various infirmities! Let Christians, in their
times of greatest distress, imitate our Lord's
gentle conduct; and, far from aggravating into a
crime every neglect of our friends, rather speak of
their faults in the mildest terms, and make the
most candid excuses for whatever we cannot
defend.

The disciples' notions of religion were still con-
fused, as the ideas of a person struggling to
awaken out of a sleep; but it would be well for
us, like them, to be certain of at least this,— that
our spirit really is willing; which none can assert
until they have made every effort, because all

must find that the flesh is most lamentably weak. Some persons talk of being afraid to fall, who will not take the trouble to stand; for have not our professions been as loud as Peter's, while our watching was as careless, and our sleep as sound? Have we ever watched faithfully for even one hour?

The Apostles were now, and until their miraculous installation by the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit, in the minority, as it were, of their mission; but when they were afterwards supernaturally gifted for the public platform of their holy office, as ambassadors from God to man, they became at once fitted for their high trust,—becoming powerful disputants and great linguists, besides being bold enough to cope with the Jewish Sanhedrim, able to confute the profoundest Rabbis, to out-argue the very Athenians, and to meet, without shrinking, death itself. It is interesting to observe that as diversity of language was the first symptom of this world's confusion, so the gift of tongues was given to the disciples as an instrument of man's salvation, that each might hear in *his own tongue*.

Before Christ had prayed, He feared
Verse 46. His sufferings; but now His apprehensions are in the right manner conquered by an appeal to God; therefore He calls His disciples to rise and be going—not, however, to flee from the danger, for He advanced to meet it. From

the beginning to the close of Christ's agony He had not one moment's intermission; and here we find the history of our Lord's being taken into custody. The first who approached, leading His enemies, was one of Christ's own disciples, who, an hour or two ago, had supped with Him. He was accompanied by a disorderly multitude, made up in part by a detachment from the guards posted in the tower of Antonia under the Roman governor. These were Gentiles, and the rest were Jews at variance among themselves, but agreed against Christ. None of these were regular troops, but a tumultuous rabble of armed men, carrying torches in the dark. The soldiers carried swords, and the mob wielded clubs; yet had the concourse been ten times more numerous, they could not have taken Jesus unless He had voluntarily yielded. With more ease than Peter drew his sword, Christ could have summoned to His aid as many legions of angels as there were legions of men enlisted under the Roman eagles; but our Lord chose in this remarkable instance to exhibit a great example of silent submission, while, nevertheless, we see how throughout His whole conduct in life, and till death, His divinity beamed through His humanity.

It is noticed by three Evangelists, Verses 47, 48. as an aggravation to the guilt of Judas, that he was one of the twelve. Our Lord,

probably, according to common custom in the East, welcomed His disciples in the most condescending and affectionate manner, by permitting them to kiss His cheek, as a token, when they returned from any mission, of allegiance and friendship. Judas violated all the laws of love, confidence, and duty, when he profaned the sacred sign, in order that his Master might be identified by Roman soldiers who had probably never seen Him, and might have seized by mistake one of the disciples.

An ancient author, in describing that scene of treachery, has indignantly imagined that hereafter, when Judas enters the gate of hell, Satan shall welcome him, by returning the kiss with which he betrayed the Son of God; and in Spenser's poems, too, Pilate, who, with a strange mixture of guilt and remorse, washed his hands to indicate his innocence of the blood of Jesus, is described by the poet as for ever repeating in hell that vain act of symbolical purification.

Are there not many now who, under pretext of doing Christ honour, betray Him as Judas did, undermining the interests of His kingdom, and proving, as that Apostle did, that to embrace is one thing, but to love is another? Does not the world, too, caress and favour most those whom it betrays to Satan, that those on whom honours

and flatteries are heaped may become fast bound in the adamantine chains of darkness ?

Christ asks Judas wherefore he has
Verse 50. come. If as an enemy, why that kiss of peace ?—if as a friend, what mean those swords and staves, as if He were a man of desperate character, and armed to defend His life ? It seems wonderful that Judas, rather than appear so forwardly in this dreadful transaction, did not keep out of sight ; but apostates from religion become usually, as we see in the case of the Emperor Julian, its most bitter enemies. Christ was now a prisoner that He might set us at liberty.

St. John mentions that it was Peter
Verse 51. who here fought for Christ, being ready now to redeem the pledge, volunteered not long before, to lay down life itself for his Master. The Apostles were not intended, however, to fight for religion, though they must be ready to die for it. Our Lord's dignified presence overawed the assailants so entirely that they seem never to have attempted any retaliation against Peter, nor to have apprehended any one else ; yet whosoever is so unwise as unwarrantably to employ offensive weapons, may expect them to be turned against himself, without having any right to expect from heaven either success or protection.

When Edward VI., at only nine years of age, was about to be crowned, observing the swords of

state carried before him in the procession, he called earnestly for a Bible, saying, "That is the sword of the Spirit, without which we are nothing, — we can do nothing." It was a custom of the Romans formerly, on the death of a commander, for some soldiers voluntarily to undertake a single fight during the funeral solemnities, and to kill one another by way, as it were, of sacrifice in honour of the dead; thus declaring their loss so great that it was no longer desirable to survive. The warfare of Christ's disciples, however, was to be spiritual; and the Jews who now used the Roman sword against Christ would very soon perish by it. Our Lord does not command the officers and soldiers to put up their swords which were drawn against Himself, because they were left to the judgment of God; and thus persecutors shall be paid in their own coin. Neither does Christ chide Peter who acted from good will, though rashly. It is surprising that the zealous Apostle did not rather attack Judas; but he probably tried, in his haste, to cleave down the head of the foremost assailant. If the disciples had even yet understood the purpose of our Lord's appointed death, they would not have been so surprised now when they became at last fully aware of His intention to surrender.

Though the traitorous business had
Verse 59. gone so far, Christ could with one word,

as He now declares, have turned the scale, and summoned to His aid all the host of heaven. This idea will appear most truly sublime, if we reflect on the execution made in the powerful Assyrian army by a single angel in one night. Had Christ now chosen to resist the swords and staves of the Jews, those weapons would have been as briars before a consuming fire, and their iron as straw.

Christ had given His enemies no occasion to look upon Him as one absconded from justice, that they should steal upon Him thus clandestinely in the night. They might have found Him in the Temple every day, ready to answer all objections or charges; and, as the priests had not only the custody of the Temple, but the command of the guards around it, they might have seized Jesus there.

Here is described the arraignment of our Lord, in the ecclesiastical court, before the great Sanhedrim. Though it was in the dead of night, when others were fast asleep in their beds, yet the Scribes and Elders, to gratify their malice, denied themselves rest, and sat up all night to wreak their jealousy on our great Teacher, who had so completely eclipsed them. Now was the hour and the power of darkness!

Here began Peter's denying Christ. To follow only afar off was, in such

circumstances, to forsake. There is danger in drawing back, as well as in, like Lot's wife, looking back ; and Peter, who should have appeared for his Master in the court, stole in where a good fire was burning, probably according to custom, of coals laid on the pavement.

Peter sat with the servants to screen himself ; and thus ventured into the midst of this wicked crew, though our Lord had particularly warned him, that this night the danger should arise to himself, of being led to deny his Master.

“ Of all defects with which frail man is curst,
How oft a want of firmness proves the worst !
Ah ! rather seek to build upon the wave,
Than trust one hour to indecision’s slave.”

As Christians would avoid all contact with men infected by the plague, or other contagious disorders, so should they avoid those who could lead them into the dangerous leprosy of sin. The Jews had seized Christ, bound Him, abused Him ; and, after all, have now to seek for something which they can lay to His charge. They can show no cause for His commitment ; yet, wrong or right, they were pre-determined to condemn Jesus ; at the same time, to put a better colour on the deed, they made proclamation, that if any one could give information against the prisoner at the bar, they were ready to receive accusations.

Though many were induced to appear against our Lord, the Council could find no two persons agreeing in one testimony, without which no man might be put to death. Two at length did concur in asserting that Christ uttered words which they misstated and distorted; while it does not appear in what respect these words, had they been actually spoken, could have been capitally criminal. The high priest, however, arose immediately in great commotion, as if some unparalleled crime had been proved. The Jews, when they abandoned other idols, made a perfect idol of their Temple; but St. John says, that when Christ spoke of being able to destroy and restore the Temple in three days, He alluded to His own body, and probably laid His hand on it to indicate His meaning.

How wonderful is that earthly tabernacle of our immortal soul, which Christ could thus Himself raise from the dead ! It is recorded of Galen, who had no more religion than what the study of medicine taught him, that, on examining the wonderful structure of a human body, he challenged any man, after a hundred years' study, to discover how the smallest fibre or the minutest particle might be more judiciously placed, either for use or beauty. If God has thus admirably formed the case, will He not also adorn the jewel within,

if we seek for our souls a likeness to our Divine Lord, our perfect model?

Our Saviour at first held His peace, not as one sullen, nor self-condemned, nor astonished, nor in confusion; but He knew perfectly that the evidence did not even appear valid; He saw that the judges were aware of its being worthless; and He was conscious that only from His own lips could they draw any pretext for His approaching condemnation. Christ stood mute at this bar, that He might have something to say for us at the bar of God hereafter.

When the high priest now adjured our Lord to answer his question, it was most cunningly put; for if Christ confessed that he was the son of God, the Council stood ready to condemn Him for blasphemy. If, on the contrary, he denied it, they were equally willing to condemn Him as an impostor for deluding the people. Though Jesus now stood at the bar, He intimates that they should soon behold Him on the throne, and refers them to the general judgment, summoning them then and there to appear to answer for what they are now doing. How altered will then be the thoughts of those who were now surrounding the judgment-seat! and how will their grim, offended conscience upbraid them! The conviction of their own guilt and consequent ruin will then flash into their minds with indescribable anguish.

“ —— I — I beheld him,
 The man of Nazareth whom thou mean'st — I saw him
 When he went labouring up the accursed hill ;
 Heavily on his scourg'd and bleeding shoulders
 Press'd the rough cross ; and from his crowned brow
 (Crown'd with no kingly diadem) the pale blood
 Was shaken off, as with a patient pity
 He look'd on us, the infuriate multitude ;
 He look'd around him, even in that last anguish,
 With such a majesty of calm compassion,
 Such solemn adjuration to our souls —
 But yet 'twas not reproachful, only sad —
 As though our guilt had been the bitterest pang
 Of suffering. And there dwelt about him still,
 About his drooping head and fainting limb,
 A sense of power, as though he chose to die,
 Yet might have shaken off the load of death.”

MILMAN.

A special part was appointed of the
 Verse 65. Jewish garment to be rent on great occasions, in token of grief, or when any thing was done or said disrespectful to God. An incision was then made, some inches long, in the drapery with a knife; but the high priest was forbidden, on any occasion, to rend his own robes. Caiaphas triumphs, however, now in the success of his snare to entrap our Lord, so that he can at length be judged out of his own mouth.

Prisoners, between their condemnation and execution, are usually taken, in the meanwhile, under the special protection of
 Verses 67, 68.

those laws to which they must ultimately make satisfaction ; and by all civilised nations they have been treated with tenderness, the condign punishment which awaits them being, with the sad retinue of disastrous consequences, a sufficient penalty. But after the Jews had passed sentence upon our Lord, He was treated as if hell were broken loose upon Him,—as if death were not good enough for Him, and as if He were unworthy of the compassion shown to the worst malefactors. The Jews and Roman soldiers made sport with Jesus, as the Philistines did with Samson. It is grievous enough to those in affliction for people around them to be merry, but how much more to make merry with them and with their misery ! Men put a somewhat similar affront on Christ who profanely jest with the Scriptures, and make themselves merry with holy things ; and it should humble all mankind to see what bitter malignity and cruelty are in human nature, if not restrained by principle, for it is the same in all ages of the world. Dr. South mentions that, during the trial of Charles I., his enemies proposed that he should be hung on a gibbet in his robes of state, and afterwards that a stake should be driven through his head and body, to stand as a monument on his grave. While thus every horror of death was suggested that the malice of traitors could suggest, or their own guilt deserve, it only served

to prove that the depravity of man's nature is unchangeably the same, and never more inveterate than when roused by a spirit of religious bigotry.

How faithfully the penmen of Scripture have recorded their own faults ! and how consoling to those who mourn for sin to know that even the Apostles and patriarchs were not perfect ! All the Evangelists record this mournful fall of Peter, but St. Mark especially mentions every aggravation of the offence ; and as it is the universal belief of antiquity that his Gospel was written under the special direction of Peter himself, that gives a beautiful impression of the Apostle's candour, who derived more benefit by his self-condemnation, when he wept bitterly, than by all his previous self-complacency.

Our Lord was now in the high priest's hall, not to be tried, but rather to be baited. Then it would surely have been some comfort had a friend been in sight ; but Peter stayed without, among the servants. Many persons are too apt to forget the beautiful instances of zeal and love with which Peter's history is replete, but none ever forget his fall. While eighteen hundred years have passed away, this one act of apostacy is still remembered. The time seems long ; but is not each of our sins also engraved on everlasting tablets ? — and though the ceaseless flood

of time is for ever passing over them, not one syllable of recorded evil can it obliterate. Were it not for the efficacy of Christ's blood, how could the very holiest of Christians bear this awful truth,—that as well might we expect a winter's sun to ripen summer fruit, as that the power of mere nature shall sustain man in the keen blast of temptation? It was remarked once of Luther, that he was always willing to lay down his life for the truth; but Erasmus candidly observed of himself, "Let others aspire to martyrdom; as for me, I do not think myself worthy of such an honour. I fear that if any disturbance were to arise, I should imitate Peter in his fall." Oh! blessed fault of the Apostle, that found such a Redeemer!

Every thing that Peter had seen or
verses 69, 70. heard in the high priest's palace combined to dismay him. He had been ready to fight for his Master, but he had not before thought of an ignominious death; and such is the feebleness of man, when left to his feebleness, that the Apostle was surprised into a denial of Christ. Mark informs us that at this time the cock crowed; but Peter evidently paid no attention, nor did he withdraw from temptation: and a mere man might as well throw himself into a river expecting not to become wet, as throw himself needlessly

into temptation, hoping in his own strength to escape uninjured.

Peter ventured into the porch, intending, perhaps, to depart, and there he again denied Christ with an oath. But a wise man should always begin to disbelieve an assertion, as soon as any one thinks it necessary to confirm it by giving more than his simple word.

“They swear it till affirmation breeds a doubt.”

After another hour, the Jews came with a relation of Malchus, whose ear the Apostle had cut off, and confidently pronounced him a follower of Christ. How evidently is man, in the strength of nature, meeting with temptation, like stubble in the fire that cannot but be scorched ! and Peter now, filled with extreme terror, cursed and swore. While yet the Apostle was using this awful language, the cock again crowed ; and Jesus, his injured Saviour, being come in sight, looked, probably with an expression of tender compassion, at the fallen disciple. Peter’s whole guilt now rushed into his own mind, filling him with shame, anguish, and remorse. He hastened out alone, in the darkness of night, to weep ; and that repentant Apostle’s whole subsequent conduct proved how deeply he profited by this painful lesson. Every human being has a conscience, though it is too

often a sleeping lion, only roused to action by some startling circumstance; and even then, unless God confirm our good resolutions, they melt away like snow before the fire. When we do follow Christ, it is too commonly, like Peter, at a great distance; and if repentance follow, without producing, as the Apostle's did, some evident fruit, it will be of no more use than rain on a highway, which makes it only look melancholy.

See the down-hill progress of sin!
Verse 74.

Peter had begun with evading the question of his belonging to Christ, but next he curses and swears; which might apparently have been a sufficient proof that he was no follower of the meek and lowly Jesus, considering that it is the language of our Lord's enemies to take His name in vain. Peter's sin, however, was not, like that of Judas, deliberate. He spoke very ill, but he spoke hurriedly, when taken by surprise. Where a living principle of religion exists, how slight a hint serves for a memorandum to recall it! — the soldier, by a glance at his scars, is reminded of the battle; — and here, so common a contingency as the crowing of a cock became as effectual to Peter as the voice of John could have been in the wilderness. Conscience should be to each Christian as the crowing of the cock, bringing to mind what sins he had forgotten or under-estimated. Our sorrow for guilt must be great and permanent; not

that we can hope thus to satisfy Divine justice,—a sea of tears could not do that,—but to evidence that our hearts really are changed; which is the essence of repentance.

Some ancient authors assert that as long as Peter lived, he never heard a cock crow without its making him weep; but we must not be too ready in receiving unauthenticated traditions. At Jerusalem, for instance, in modern days, a locality has been assigned by tradition to the minutest events of our Saviour's history. The exact spot is shown where lots were cast for the sacred vestment; and even the place where the cock crew when Peter denied his Master is supposed to be identified, surrounded now by the walls of an Armenian convent. Much confusion, and even some scepticism, is caused by this geographical minuteness, which has no foundation but on conjecture. The situation attributed in recent times to Mount Calvary is within the same church as the Holy Sepulchre, and raised just thirteen steps above that sacred mausoleum. This proves a total disregard to historical fact, or even probability. The very rock is also pointed out against which the Virgin Mary was leaning when she presented her infant to the adoring shepherds; and the very stone upon which Judas stood when he betrayed his Master.

Modern Christians, when they wish to pray and

mourn beside the memorials of their holy faith, must pay to Mahometans money for the sad privilege of weeping beside the Holy Sepulchre ; while the harmony of their emotions is not only destroyed by the rival tribute-seeking of Greeks, Armenians, and Copts, within the holy precincts, but also by the splendid decorations of that melancholy Golgotha, so out of keeping with the character and sufferings of a divine Saviour. Yet there are in beautiful Galilee features of nature which the art of man cannot disfigure ; and a traveller beneath that bright sky, gazing on the three hills of Jerusalem, and associating with their simple majesty all the divine wonders of which they were once the theatre, feels his mind become filled with emotions of awe, of fervour, and of sorrow, perfectly unutterable ; while the prayers which then spring to his lips are like no other prayers.

In the eighteen hundred years which have elapsed since the events recorded in this chapter, what tears of penitence have been shed on the spot ! Yet so difficult is the work of permanent reformation, that if the high road to destruction were marked by the footsteps of those who have advanced along it never to return, many might start back as the traveller did upon his progress to the lion's den, where he tremblingly observed how innumerable were the footsteps that had entered, but none that had come out. We live

in listless ignorance, or rather in guilty forgetfulness, of our own danger. As in mercantile affairs a merchant may inadvertently go on trafficking in the full belief that he is rich, when, on the contrary, he is verging on bankruptcy, but never examines his stock, nor tests his accounts; so may the *soi-disant* Christian proceed, imagining himself in a prosperous condition, while his hope has almost perished.

No man should either live or die a stranger to the depths of his own nature; and only those who have tried to fathom them can duly estimate the difficulty of thoroughly knowing himself. As one who has been stung by a serpent dreads its return, so, like Peter, the repentant sinner hates and ever after avoids sin, — not tampering with its approach, nor eagerly calculating how near he may venture again without danger, but flying with abhorrence from its most distant aspect, and looking on every recollection of the agony caused by its sting with unmitigated horror. The Christian is as careful to prevent the breaking out of his passions in time of temptation, as a mariner to bind fast the guns lest they break loose in a storm.

A Christian must not let his inward monitor, conscience, become enfeebled, as old Eli did, when, instead of severely admonishing his ill-conducted children, he merely addressed them, with blameable weakness, "Not so, my sons; not so."

No agony is so intense as that inflicted by an upbraiding conscience: in evidence of which truth, the most hardened criminals have often preferred external to internal torture, by giving themselves up to public disgrace, and death itself, rather than endure the inward torment of remorse. The greater our conscience represents the guilt to be, however, the more hope arises of obtaining Divine aid to purify it; but we must not shrink from probing the very worst of our defects. It is not the disturbance of water that defiles it, but the sediment lying at the bottom, which must be stirred up in order to be drawn off. A gale of wind does not make the dust, but only raises it and blows it away.

“ Ah ! where, I exclaim’d, is there hope for the mourner,
A balm for his sorrow, a smile for his grief?
If beautiful scenes like the present shall vanish
Where — where shall we seek for a certain relief?
Oh ! fly, said my soul, to the feet of thy Saviour,
Believe in his mercy, for pardon now pray ;
With him there is fulness of joy and salvation,
Thy gladness shall live and shall never decay :
The echo said sweetly — ‘ Shall never decay.’ ”

CHAP. XII.

“ When all thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I’m lost
In wonder, love, and praise.”

ADDISON.

MATT. xxvii.

WHEN the French were once about to invade England, they kept aloof from the Isle of Man, and passed by it, on account of the reputation for sanctity of Bishop Wilson; and, certainly, if there be but ten righteous men in a city, each Christian should feel responsible for being counted one. How many are utterly unworthy to see the light of day! and yet the daylight dawns on all the wonderful varieties of human nature! Even the best and noblest of men can exhibit but a feeble imitation of Christian courage, or of Christian forgiveness, as delineated for our example in Scripture; and all the fine sayings of the most remarkable heathens, or of the most exalted Christians, fall far short of the Divine model. During the war in La Vendée the illustrious Henri La Rochejacquelin advanced to mortal combat, and, in all the excitement of leading on

his troops to battle, he said to them, with the gallantry of a hero, but not quite in the spirit of a Christian, that much admired speech, — “ If I advance, follow me ; if I retreat, kill me ; if I die, revenge me.” Were there no other world than this, and no other master to serve, it would have been admirable ; but the dictates of mere nature never can equal those of Divine grace.

This chapter opens on the morning of ^{Verse 1.} that darkest, brightest, and most memorable day in the history of time — the important hour fixed on from all eternity for the author of life to die ; and in nothing is the true character of God so fully revealed as in the cross. The works of creation, with all their beauty and magnificence, make no such discoveries ; nor do the wondrous ways of Divine providence, much as they are fitted to arrest the attention of men, show, as we perceive here, the holiness that is untarnished, the justice that is inflexible, the amiable and awful sovereignty and goodness of our Creator.

Judea having been, almost one hundred years before, conquered by Pompey, the Romans had taken from the Jews the power of capital punishments ; and therefore, after they had been for some hours consulting their pillows, another council is held ; and the enemies of Jesus were probably the more willing to deliver him to the

governor, because the Roman punishment of crucifixion was the most ignominious and excruciating of all deaths. Pontius Pilate had been appointed in the room of Valerius Gracchus, and was a cruel, dissembling tyrant. The unwillingness of a man so impetuous and inexorable to condemn Jesus might have startled even the relentless Jews, had they not been blinded by malice and rage.

Here Judas testifies that the blood he
Verse 3. had betrayed is innocent; and surely his evidence is inestimable, being that of an enemy, whose interest it was, had he known anything against his Master, to declare it. When sin has been fully accomplished, then only we become aware of its full enormity; and, in the repentance of Judas, it is very striking here to observe, that his remorse is even more externally testified than Peter's. Let us remark that because Peter believed, he was pardoned; but Judas despaired, and was ruined. Observe that here were confession, repentance, and, as far as possible, restitution; therefore, let each Christian with the deepest seriousness examine himself whether he has ever repented as much as Judas. The inward feeling is all in all; for was not the dying malefactor, who merely said "Remember me," pardoned; but the proud Pharisee, who said "God, I thank thee!" was nevertheless con-

demned. The intention of Scripture then is, to teach that the best may despair of being saved by their own merits, but the worst shall not despair of being saved by Christ, as all are offered the help they need.

How truly has it been said, that “a fool’s thought comes always too late;” — too late to rescue, though time enough to reproach him; — and it appears as if the apostate Judas had never, till now, contemplated either the acquittal or condemnation of his Master. All he anticipated was gain; his object being to procure a certain sum of money, which he determined at all events to obtain; and he possibly imagined that as Jesus had on other occasions, when the people attempted to cast him down a precipice, or to stone him, conveyed himself away, he would have so acted now. When, however, Judas saw that benign benefactor, whom he knew to be innocent, condemned to death, his guilt in all its horrors burst upon his terrified conscience. Men foresee but little, sometimes, the consequences of their crimes when committed; but they are, nevertheless, made answerable for the worst results. When deeply agonised, however, we should remember that the Christian’s chief danger arises from being induced, like Judas, to despair of God’s mercy. Satan either persuades us that our sins are insig-

nificant, or holds them up to our affrighted minds as unpardonable.

Verse 4. Judas, in agonies of remorse, brought the money to those from whom he had received it, to let them know how bitterly he repented of his bargain ; but here is a striking example how cruelly selfish are wicked associates. If Judas had carried his repentance and confession to Christ, how differently He would have received a broken-hearted and confiding penitent ! These Jews cared not whether the prisoner were innocent, but slighted Judas, and not only left him in the snare, but ridiculed him. Men who love the treason hate the traitor, and those who have served others in sin should, when God gives them repentance, let all around know it, in hopes that others may be brought to contrition. The way of sin is down-hill ; therefore, if we cannot easily stop ourselves on the steep descent, much less can we stop others whom we may have led on in a sinful way.

It is most mournful to trace the progress of Judas from avarice to suicide ; and it is well said, that for a man to die by his own hand is a cowardly forsaking of the garrison of this life without the governor's leave. The ordinary expression on such an occasion, that a man has "put an end to himself," is incorrect, for he has only rushed unbidden out of this life into another.

Thus the remorse of Judas led to an increase of his crimes, for he became his own executioner by strangling himself; which accords with Peter's account of his falling down from a great height and bursting asunder, by supposing that the cord broke, and he fell. Thus, by God's decree, the traitor's body became a terrible spectacle, which the beholders never could forget. Woe to him who is in despair and alone! The Christian in extremity of suffering should seek advice and comfort from those in whom he can most confide; but Judas hurried away from the benignant Saviour, instead of hastening to Him for pardon. How truly did the Emperor Julian say, when expiring, "He that would not die when he must, and he who would die when he must not, are both of them cowards alike."

See the inconsistency of human nature! Those Jews scrupled about putting into the treasury money which they had themselves given as the price of blood; but how often we see sinners scrupulous about trifles, that hesitate not at great crimes! As Bishop Reynolds remarks, the priests were afraid to defile their chests, but not afraid to defile their consciences. This ill-gotten money was laid out, therefore, on the purchase of a potter's field, which was preferred for a burying-ground, being of little value, because the purpose

it previously served rendered such land unfit for agriculture.

Human nature hopes to atone for sin by acts of liberality; and the Jews now acted in the same spirit as those Romanists who believe that by building churches, or endowing charities, they can make amends for immorality. By providing a burial-place for strangers, though not at their own charge, these persecutors hoped to atone for the evil they had done to our Lord, who was himself a stranger and pilgrim on earth.

The Jews paid reverence to a dead body, not only because it had once been the habitation of a rational soul, but because it must be so again; and in every age Christians have paid a most affecting respect to those poor remains of mortality after they are deserted by the soul. During the Crusades, Louis IX. found the neighbourhood of Sidon strewed with the putrid bodies of massacred Christians, and desired a spot of ground to be consecrated by his chaplain immediately, that all those corpses might be decently buried. Instead of obeying their monarch, the whole French army turned away with horror and disgust; but the good king dismounted from horseback himself, and, with his own hands, lifting one of the dead bodies, exclaimed, “Come, my friends, let us give a resting-place to the martyrs of Jesus Christ !”

Verse 11. Innocence is no protection against tyrannical power, for accusing is proving where malice and force are united ; but little did Pilate now suspect that he himself must one day stand before the tribunal of that very person whom he was now about to judge as a criminal. When he carelessly asked, " What is truth ? " he put the question to Him who is truth ; and there never was but one individual who could stand before the world to declare, " I am the truth ! "

This was no court day ; nevertheless Pilate immediately took our Lord's case before him, while the Jews violently accuse Christ of being an enemy to Cæsar, which, in fact, they all were themselves, being universally disaffected. How often it has been the hard fate of Christ's holy religion unjustly to fall under the suspicions of the civil power ! as if it were opposed to government, instead of actually inculcating obedience. Many dislike Christianity from totally misunderstanding its nature ; and having dressed it up in false colours, they fight against they know not what.

Verse 14. Jesus had no guilt to confess ; yet He did not exculpate Himself, because He submitted to die a sacrifice for our sins, and it would be of little avail to reason where the adversary is both party and judge. Nature gives to man not only a voice to express his feelings,

but also silence, in which our strongest emotions are often manifested. Thus a constant noise is made by the crackling of thorns when they are burned, but a great log of wood consumes in the fire silently.

This remarkable silence of our Lord, which was doubtless distinguished by a mild and sedate dignity, quite unlike the sullenness of a criminal, astonished Pilate. There is a great decorum in silent endurance; and as Peter dishonoured Christ by denying Him thrice, so Pilate, a heathen, honoured Christ by thrice owning Him to be innocent. Though our Lord would use neither arguments nor entreaties to rescue Himself, yet Pilate, having no malice against the prisoner, urges Jesus to clear Himself, asking if He were King of the Jews. Our Lord's reply seems to mean, "I am a king, but not such a king as thou dost suspect. It is as thou sayest, not as thou meanest."

Those who attribute exaggerated importance to mere external ornament, should study here in what the real dignity of our Lord consisted. No royal diadem could have been invested with so much glory as the crown of thorns in which Jesus now calmly stood amidst the raging multitude, while He was buffeted, scourged, scoffed at, and finally crucified, without uttering one impatient word. We learn here, that those who revenge an injury as little resemble our Lord as those who

inflict one, for both shall hereafter be considered malefactors in the court of heaven.

Nothing is so difficult as passive suffering, and to quell our passions by our principles. As a long-protracted siege is harder to endure than the hot conflict of a battle, so it is easier actively to do God's will than calmly to suffer it. In the heat of a quarrel, or in the tumult of a battle, men forget themselves amidst the surrounding excitement, for most men would rather vent their own violence than suffer that of another; but our Lord stood in the supreme dignity of an immovable mind amidst the storm of persecution and insult by which he was now beset. What earthly grandeur could have added to the moral dignity of our Lord in such an hour! Instead of a golden crown, a crown of thorns; for a sceptre, a reed; for a throne, the cross; and instead of a palace, Christ had not where to lay His head, nor a grave of His own when He died: yet while Christians appreciate, with profound adoration, the privations He beneficially endured for our sakes, it was the Jews only who expected external magnificence. They looked for worldly pomp, while we are taught here to recognise, through the disguise of a human form, the King of Glory, the King of Kings, — the heavens His throne, the earth His footstool, the light His garment, the clouds His chariot, the thunder His voice, His

strength omnipotence, His glory infinite, and His retinue the host of heaven.

It was a custom among the Roman governors to humour the Jews, and also to grace their Feast of the Passover by releasing a prisoner. Barabbas, who had been guilty of the three most enormous crimes that ever the sword of justice punishes,—treason, murder, and felony,—is here put in competition with our Lord. Pilate hoped both to satisfy his own conscience and the people, by releasing Jesus on their own election; but such artifices for trimming between conscience and the world, so as to satisfy both, are not successful.

How thoroughly Oliver Cromwell knew the world, when, amidst the cheers of a multitude, once, he turned to his friend Ireton, saying, “These men would make the same noise if we were going to be executed!” In this verse we see the uncertainty of popular favour exemplified. Only a few days previously Christ, surrounded by the Hosannas of a multitude, seemed to have no enemies; but now he appears to have no friends. The release of Barabbas might be considered a very fit emblem of the sinner’s release, by Jesus dying in his stead. Pilate’s question respecting Christ “What evil hath he done?” is a proper inquiry before we censure any one, even in common discourse,—how

much more a judge before he pass sentence of death! but the Roman governor's character was weak and vacillating. It is recorded in history that Pilate died many years afterwards, miserable and disgraced, at Vienne in France. How wonderfully do the Scriptures evidence that the very enemies of God ignorantly promoted the glory of the Gospel, by fulfilling its prophecies, as in the case of Pontius Pilate, Darius, Caesar, Alexander, the Romans, the Jews, and Herod.

Neither Christ's judge nor his persecutors could find out that he had thought, said, or done any evil; therefore his accusers do not now attempt to show that our Lord had acted wrong, but, quitting all pretensions to proof, they weary this unjust judge, by their importunity, into an unjust sentence.

It was the custom among heathens, as well as Jews, in token of innocence, to wash their hands; and if a dead body were found, the murderer of which could not be discovered, the law of Moses ordained that all the elders of that city next the slain man should wash their hands. Here Pilate endeavours to transfer the guilt of this condemnation from himself; and probably the clamour was so great, that only by a sign could he be understood. The Roman governor seemed desirous to intimate, "If this innocent be crucified, bear witness that it

is not of my doing." There was no advantage, however, in merely protesting against an evil which he had the power of preventing.

Let justice be done, though heaven and earth come together: but how many deceive themselves by thinking that they shall bear no blame, if they can but lay the blame on another. Is, then, the condition of a man infected with the plague less dangerous, either because he catches the infection from others, or because he communicates the infection to others? Pilate was tempted here to sin, but no man can be forced.

Verse 25. The priests and people seeing that it was Pilate's dread of guilt which made him hesitate, eagerly confirmed him in the fancy of transferring the penalty to them, rather than lose their prey. The Jews, who had all the venom and malignity without the wisdom of the serpent, were quite ready to take upon themselves the blood of which Pilate was so anxious to be cleared; and their imprecation was so awfully answered, that it may be a lesson to succeeding generations for ever against swearing. On these Jews and their children the sacred blood of Jesus fell, not for the merciful purpose intended by its being shed—not to save—but to condemn. It is remarkable how very small a proportion of Jews have since been converted, and among these how very few have been what could be called satis-

factory Christians, being too often neither very decidedly one way or the other, but more resembling the blank sheet of paper always placed between the Old and New Testament, that seems as if it belonged to either. Let Christians pray that in a very different sense Christ's blood may be upon them and their children, not to testify against, but to save and bless them. With such a cheering hope, all worldly trials or sorrows would be no more appalling to the assured spirit of a trusting disciple, than the rushing of rain against a window to him who sits in safety at home. The day must come, however, to each living mortal, when he must be forsaken of all the world,—when relations, friends, and neighbours are all unable to afford him help; but in the awful moment of our solitary departure, let us think on the Redeemer, now alone in his agony for our sakes, and willing to be with us then in ours.

It is mentioned here as the greatest Verse 26. triumph of all, that Christ "despised the shame," which to a great and good mind is truly worse than death, being the torment of the soul. Scourging was not only an ignominious punishment, but most cruel as inflicted by the Romans, who did not, like the Jews, limit the number to "forty stripes save one." This torture should not, according to law, have been inflicted

on any one condemned to die, because the rod was always meant to supersede the axe. Contrary to law, the Jews condemn Christ to death; and, contrary to custom, that death is crucifixion. This was a mode of execution so shameful and agonized, that the more compassionate princes caused those under condemnation to be strangled first, and afterwards nailed to the cross. Thus Julius Caesar acted by the pirates he executed; and the first Christian emperor, Constantine, in honour of our Saviour, abolished crucifixion entirely.

A law had been made in the time of Tiberius, that the execution of criminals should be deferred at least ten days after sentence had been pronounced; but now there were scarcely allowed so many minutes to our Lord Jesus, nor had he any breathing time during those minutes, for his enemies, in their malice, would, if possible, have wrapped up a thousand deaths in one. They put on our Lord some old red cloak, such as the Roman soldiers wore, to imitate the scarlet robes of a monarch; and as it was the custom to crown their sacrifices at the altar with garlands, they would perhaps have platted the crown, as usual, of flowers, straw, and rushes, but for the cruel invention of those who suggested thorns, and who perhaps piqued themselves on the cruel ingenuity of doing so. How many there are, in all

ages, who, by a malicious wit, are desirous to make others miserable, by which their own souls are endangered; and many who have excited temporary laughter on sacred occasions might with greater impunity have played with a thunder-bolt as it fell from heaven.

When Huss, the Bohemian martyr, was burned, his enemies placed on his head a triple crown of paper, with painted devils on it. Seeing this, the sufferer calmly said, "My Lord Jesus Christ, for my sake, wore a crown of thorns; why should not I, then, for his sake, wear this light crown, be it ever so ignominious? Truly I will do it, and that willingly." When the brave Montmorenci, too, was executed by order of King Louis, he threw off his own superb dress, exclaiming, "Dare I, criminal as I am, die with vain ostentation, when my Saviour died unclothed on the cross?"

Verse 33. Golgotha was probably the common place of execution, as criminals were not put to death within the walls of Jerusalem. It was customary to give those enduring this most lingering and painful death a potion to benumb their feelings; but Christ refused both the myrrh offered in compassion, and the vinegar presented in malignity. His purpose was to suffer death in all its bitterness. The sufferer during crucifixion

often lingered a whole day and night in his anguish, and our Saviour's lasted six hours.

Among all nations, the shame of the cross was considered so great, that death was the least part of the suffering, as the infamy might have been sufficient punishment for any criminal without the pain. Among the Romans, it was used only for slaves, or the vilest malefactors. The usual mode of execution was thus. After the sufferer had carried the cross, followed by every possible taunting expression of insult, to the scene of his torment, a deep hole was dug, in which the end of the cross should, after the execution, be planted. The cross was then laid on the ground, and the condemned person, being stripped, was extended over it, while the soldiers, either with nails or thongs, fixed him to it; after which, they elevated the cross; and when the lower end was jerked into the cavity prepared for its reception, the agonized sufferer then received a shock, which hastened the moment of his release by death. To this the Psalmist alludes, when he says, "All my bones are out of joint." The victim hung until pain, exhaustion, starvation, and thirst, ended his life; and the body after some days generally became a prey to birds.

Every representation of our Lord's last agony must be inadequate to express the amazing weight of His suffering; but the utmost extremity of

bodily anguish, such as He now endured for us is far exceeded by what He mentally encountered to accomplish the salvation of man. It is painful and oppressive to behold any of those paintings, sublime as they are, which exhibit with such startling truth, the bodily martyrdom of our Lord; but fearfully as the corporeal tortures must be regarded, no pencil can paint those sufferings of the mind, which were the deepest trial. It is not the worst part of our Lord's martyrdom that the hand of man can paint, or the eye of man behold; and a very different sympathy, with less of horror, and with still deeper emotion, attends on the conscious contemplation of our Lord's mental sufferings. It is strange in our own experience to consider how very soon the worst bodily torments fade from our own recollection. To witness the most painful operation that could be performed on the body, would shock the nerves of any beholder; but to see a friend agonized in mind, excites far deeper and more acute emotion! No one is the more unhappy for remembering the pain he himself endured a month ago; but the recollection of mental trials, of grief or remorse, or the pain of having been injured and hated, remains for ever fresh and rankling in the soul. "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and, after that, have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear Him

which, after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell ; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him."

The garments of those that are executed ^{Verse 35.} become generally the executioner's fee ; and, as four soldiers were employed in crucifying Christ, each must have a share. They had only some hours before, in mockery, covered our Lord with one of their own robes, and now they take off His own upper garment. If divided, it would have been of no use ; therefore, the soldiers cast lots for it. Some conjecture that, perhaps, they had heard of people being cured by touching the hem, and thought the garment valuable for some inherent magical power, or that they hoped to get money of Christ's friends for so sacred a relic ; but no countenance is given in Scripture to an excessive reverence for such memorials.

During those primitive times, it was ^{Verse 37.} usual in remarkable cases, not only for a crier to proclaim, but also, by a writing over the sufferer's head, to notify, what was his crime. Pilate ordered that this should be written in different languages over Christ's head, designing it for our Lord's reproach ; but God so ordered it, that the accusation redounded to his honour, as no crime is alleged against him. It is not asserted that Christ was a pretender, or an usurper ; but, on the contrary, here a very glorious truth is de-

clared, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." As Balaam, when sent for to curse the tribes of Israel, blessed them three times, so Pilate, instead of accusing Christ as a criminal, proclaimed him in three inscriptions as a king: —

"Thou wert alone in that fierce multitude,
When 'Crucify him!' yelled the general shout.
No hand to guard Thee 'mid those insults rude,
Nor lips to bless Thee, in that frantic rout;
Whose lightest whisper'd word
The seraphim had heard,
And adamantine arms from all the heavens broke out."

MILMAN.

CHAP. XIII.

“ Our day of grace is sunk in night—thy noon is in its prime;
O turn and seek thy Saviour’s face in this accepted time!
So, Gentile, may Jerusalem a lesson prove to thee,
And in the New Jerusalem thy home for ever be !”

HEBRE.

THE Jews here acknowledge that ^{Verse 42.} Christ saved others, and the Christian knows that He could now, as on other occasions, have saved Himself. The great gospel-truth, however, is, that our Lord would not save Himself now, because He would save us eternally. Christ had before intimated the sign He should give them, — not His coming down from the cross, — but His coming up from the grave. If anything could have rendered our Saviour indifferent to the eternal welfare of one human being, it would have been now, when surrounded by the scoffings of a countless multitude, and tortured with bodily agony; yet the benignity of Christ’s character was never more beautifully evinced, than towards His penitent companion in this the hour of direst extremity.

Excessive thirst was one of the torments that generally accompanied crucifixion; and a sponge

was now offered to our Lord, as it would have been impossible with a cup to reach the height at which he was elevated. This vinegar was a light wine turned sour, the common beverage of the Roman soldiers ; therefore, a vessel full of it was ready perhaps at hand for their use. Earth now denied our Lord a drop of cold water, and heaven denied Him a beam of light. An extraordinary light had formerly given intelligence of Christ's birth ; but an extraordinary darkness notified His death. Phlegon, who lived in the second century, is supposed to speak of this darkness, as he mentions an eclipse of the sun at that period, in the sixth hour. Thallus also mentions one, accompanied by an earthquake, which threw down many houses in Judea. We read, likewise, that Dionysius the Areopagite, being in Egypt when our Saviour suffered, saw a wonderful eclipse of the sun ; whereupon, he said to a friend, " Either God Himself suffers, or He sympathises with the sufferer ! "

How truly was it remarked by Rousseau, that Socrates died like a philosopher; but Jesus Christ like a God. A picture of the Crucifixion was recently painted by Overbeck, in which the Virgin Mary is represented, not, as is usually conceived, fainting with grief, on account of our Lord's agony, but, on the contrary, conscious of His impending triumph, she clasps her hands in

a rapture of joy, that His work is accomplished. It is interesting to observe that, though the sin of woman brought on the fall of Adam, no woman seems ever to have acted against the second Adam, Christ, during His earthly career ; but, on the contrary, women affording us the brightest example of female courage, were the last around their Lord's cross, and the first at His resurrection. He was anointed for burial by a woman, a heathen woman petitioned with the Roman governor, her husband, for His life: and throughout His whole career, He was faithfully ministered to, in Galilee, by women. The attachment of women is always riveted by the sufferings of those they love ; and though they cannot do for others all they would, they will at least do all they can.

The practice of Papists to worship before a tangible crucifix is less to be wondered at, since those who have only the image of a religion may be satisfied to worship the image of a Deity ; but Christians should ascertain that their more enlightened faith is equally influential in its moral effects. Many are sufficiently ready to blame the cowardice of all the Apostles, and the treachery of Judas ; to wonder at the malice of Christ's accusers, at the iniquity of His judge, and at the cruelty of His executioners ; but what danger do we encounter for His sake ? what interests do we

sacrifice ? what pleasures do we deny ourselves ? what great men do we presume to differ from ? what promotion or pecuniary advantage forego, in order to maintain that cause of virtue and piety which was dearer to Christ than life itself ? Does the sinner even feel as true a remorse as Judas did ?

After three hours of silent suffering,
Verse 46. Jesus cried out in the Syriac tongue those words which his enemies perversely misconstrued, by putting Elias for Eli ; the Roman soldiers doing so probably in ignorance, and the Jews knowingly perverting our Lord's meaning, to make it appear as if, when forsaken by God, He was driven to trust in man. When our Saviour's soul was first troubled, He had a voice from heaven to comfort him ; and when He suffered His agony in the garden, there appeared an angel from heaven strengthening Him ; but now, He had neither consolation, because, while God unchangeably loved our Lord as a son, yet, as a surety, He frowned upon Him. No ordinary grief could have found such strength of expression as Christ's, and even these words appear but the copy of such a sorrow as would rather attempt to express itself, than either does, or can. Still Jesus, while He thus quenched in His blood the flame of Divine wrath against man, still says, in His anguish, with unshaken faith,

“ My God ! ” and here then is the great mystery accomplished, that our Creator can be infinitely just, and yet man not infinitely miserable.

Christ continued in the body, with ^{Verse 50.} steady resolution so long as was necessary for the expiation of our sins ; and then retired from it with a majesty never to be equalled. The voice of dying men is in general the first thing to fail ; but our Lord’s life was whole in Him still ; therefore, when resigning His spirit, He spoke with a loud voice, and freely delivered up His life into His Father’s hands. Christ’s loud cry might be considered to represent the sound of the trumpet usually blown over the sacrifices ; and surely the soul of any spectator not awakened to conviction by that solemn scene, must have been not merely asleep, but dead.

So many miracles having been wrought ^{Verse 51.} by Christ during His life, we might confidently expect that some should be exhibited at His death. On the side of Mount Calvary, that fissure in the rock is still pointed out, which was rent by an earthquake when our Saviour gave up the ghost. The miraculous rending of the vail in the Temple, signified the revealing and unfolding of the Old Testament mysteries, which it had so long concealed ; and it also intimated the uniting of Jew and Gentile by removing the partition between them. All dividing vails may be

considered as rent by the death of our only Saviour; and as two rooms are made one by taking down the division, so were the two dispensations merged together. Now, for the confirmation of our faith, we need no more proof, nor shall we obtain more.

So firm was the belief of Louis IX. in all those sacred events and mysteries of Christianity, that he said, if a miracle were on the point of being performed to establish his faith, he would not stir a step to behold it.

Never before did the whole creation groan under such a burden as the crucified Son of God, and the guilty beings who crucified Him. Perfect goodness had now appeared in the world, and the corrupt world could not bear the sight. If, then, the earth was cursed for receiving the blood of Abel, it might indeed tremble on receiving that of Christ; but the hearts of the Jews were harder than stones. The rocks are rent, the earth is shaken, the judge entreats, the centurion believes, the elements are agitated, and the tombs are opened; yet the obdurate Jews are unmoved.

Who those saints were that arose we
Verse 52. are not informed, for the Bible frustrates idle curiosity; nor are we told whether they afterwards died or ascended. It is a noble hope, however, that when mortality becomes immortal-

ized, and the human body is at length glorified for eternity, it will form a new feature in the society of heaven, that man shall enter there, when these ruined bodies shall be gifted with more than the purity and happiness for which, in paradise, they were originally created.

It was probably an immediate answer to Verse 54. our Saviour's prayers for His persecutors, that the centurion was induced to make the glorious, though late, confession, that this was indeed the Son of God. Thus Christ's bitterest enemies as clearly acknowledged Him as the best of his Apostles could have done.

When all our Saviour's disciples had fled, it is gratifying to learn that one zealous individual, Joseph of Arimathea, a person of influence and authority, should not be ashamed to own his Lord. How easy it is to act a faithful part when credit accompanies piety; but the real friends of religion are they who thus adhere to it when scorned. Christ was now, according to prophecy, placed in a rich man's own tomb, so new, that it was then unfinished; and travellers state, that even yet, one corner of the Holy Sepulchre remains rough and unhewn. The ground about Jerusalem is chiefly rocky, and it was well ordered that Christ's tomb should be a new one, in which no other dead body had ever before been laid, that there might arise no doubt of our Lord's identity:

and also its being cut in the solid rock, prevented any possibility of the disciples having secret access to steal the body away. Truly there was little probability, however, that the Apostles, who had not courage to own Christ before His death, would venture afterwards to steal His body.

In after ages, when the gallant crusaders, volunteering from every Christian country in one spirited enterprise, first gained sight of the Holy Sepulchre, it is affecting to read how they all at once dismounted, fell on their knees, laid aside their arms, and burst into tears ; advancing afterwards towards the sacred spot with bare feet and head, singing anthems in praise of Him who died for them. It was the custom of those pious warriors every night before they dispersed to slumber, that a herald called out three times successively, these words, “Help the Holy Sepulchre !” It was indeed a happy moment to those ancient crusaders, when at length Robert, son of William the Conqueror, hung up as a trophy within the vault of the Sepulchre, the standard and sword of the Sultan.

How different were the cold, unexcited feelings of the French soldiers, in more modern times, when they approached Jerusalem, the cradle of their religion, the city where that was transacted which procured salvation and future felicity to man ! When the army approached Mount Carmel

and Nazareth, when visiting the birth-place of Christ, and beholding from afar the scene of his sufferings, those holy places inspired them with no emotion. Those sacred localities were indifferently regarded as only Syrian villages, unconnected either by history or tradition with any interesting recollections. The descendants of Godfrey de Bouillon and Raymond de Thoulouse, the representatives of those heroes who perished in delivering the Holy Sepulchre, viewed those scenes of the Crusaders' glory with indifference. Names, at which the hearts of their forefathers would have thrilled with emotion, were regarded by them only as the abode of barbarous tribes.

The Sepulchre could only be entered
Verse 56.

by a door, which was watched by soldiers; and as it was death for a Roman guard to sleep when on duty, we may suppose how circumspect the sentinels were. The number on duty is calculated to have been about sixty, so they could scarcely have been all asleep at once. If they did slumber, it was impossible for them to know what passed; and if any were awake, why did they not alarm the others? Thus the Jews themselves contrived the means by which the resurrection should be cleared from all doubt; and if their infidelity struggles to prevail, every effort only entangles them the more, like a wild captive held in the net which was laid for him.

Verse 65. Pilate, anxious as usual to please all parties, allowed Christ's friends to bury his body, and his enemies to set a guard over it. Tertullian, speaking of Pilate, says, "In his conscience he was a Christian." It is indeed possible that having heard from the centurion, his own officer, the miracles attendant on our Lord's death, he might have been, like Agrippa or Felix, "almost persuaded" to be a Christian.

Verse 66. We read that when Daniel was cast into the lions' den, the king, according to ancient custom, sealed it with his signet; and on this occasion it was probably with the great seal of their Sanhedrim that the Jews closed the stone over the Holy Sepulchre. Who, then, durst break the public seal!

Here were all the powers of earth and hell combined to keep Christ a prisoner, but in vain. Death and all the sons and heirs of death could not hold our Lord; and those very men set to oppose Christ's resurrection became important witnesses of it. Luke and John relate more proofs of our Lord's resurrection than either Matthew or Mark do; but in this, one chapter are related all those great facts on which the whole of a Christian's hope in life and all his consolation in death depend. It is impossible, therefore, too anxiously to cultivate just views and feelings in

respect to the circumstances and the intention of our Divine Redeemer's death.

“ 'Tis finish'd!—was his latest voice;
Those sacred accents o'er,
He bow'd his head, gave up the ghost,
And suffer'd pain no more.
'Tis finish'd—the Messiah dies
For sins, but not his own;
The great redemption is complete,
And Satan's power o'erthrown.”

To Christian travellers in the present day approaching with reverential awe the Holy Sepulchre, their gratification on arriving must be, at best, but a painful pleasure. All Jerusalem now most lamentably exemplifies how entirely the dignified simplicity of Christian institutions is distorted and degraded by too much ornament, when the taste of man is exerted to improve that noblest institution of God, His holy ordinances, which are greatest in their simplicity. “The Church of the Holy Sepulchre,” says an intelligent modern traveller*, “is a flagrant instance of perverted taste, being more like a theatre than a temple of worship; and the first feeling of an enlightened Christian on entering within the walls is one of shame and mortification at the absurd misrepresentations and almost confessed impositions with

* Tour from Cornhill to Grand Cairo.

which he is beset. A disgusting crowd of licensed beggars surrounds the entrance, and the legends with which the Greeks and Latins have garnished the interior are as misplaced as the hideous barbaric pictures and ornaments which they have lavished on it. Flaring candles, reeking incense, savage pictures of Scripture story, or portraits of kings who have been benefactors to the various chapels; a din and clatter of strange people weeping, bowing, kissing, or perhaps utterly indifferent; and the priests, clad in outlandish robes, snuffing and chanting incomprehensible litanies; robing, disrobing, lighting of candles or extinguishing them, advancing, retreating, bowing, with all sorts of unfamiliar genuflexions. Jarred and distracted by such strange sights with which that holy place is desecrated, the church most celebrated in the world seems to an Englishman the least sacred spot about Jerusalem. It is said that the Roman conquerors, to destroy all memory of this place, raised up a statue of Venus upon it; but the Christian seems even more criminal to choose such a place for imposture, and to sully it with brutal struggles for self-aggrandisement or shameful schemes of gain,—the wonder and disgrace of mankind."

The situation of our Lord's tomb, into which no man could enter without a shock of breathless fear and deep, awful self-humiliation, is in the

centre of an arched rotunda, which is common to all denominations. Above, the cupola is open, and you see the blue sky overhead.

On Easter, even the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is crowded with Christians of the Greek and Latin Churches, fighting for the holy fire which the Greek priests pretend that they can cause to issue, as from heaven, at two apertures in the Sepulchre. On this occasion the chief priest of the Greeks is accompanied by the Turkish governor! All is then confusion, squabbling, screaming, and struggling to see who shall first light his taper by this holy fire. The scene is most disgraceful and disgusting, while it becomes at last perfectly dangerous. Many lives are often lost; but, during the fray, groups of Turks sit composedly on a divan at the church door, smoking, and collecting entrance-money; others are stationed round the tomb to preserve something like order; and the Pasha sits in a sort of gallery above, looking on with the contempt, no doubt, which the scene deserves. How different from the simple purity of true, classical, unadulterated Christianity, adorned chiefly by the virtues of those who implicitly follow the example and the precepts of our lowly, peaceful, but Divine Master!

Not long since Ibrahim Pasha chose to witness the miraculous appearance of this holy fire, the bursting out of which was on that day so long

postponed, that the people's impatience grew to perfect frenzy. As on a different occasion Bonaparte ordered that the miracle should instantaneously take place of St. Januarius's blood beginning to flow, so Ibrahim Pasha imperatively commanded the fire instantly to burn. Many spectators had already sunk under the effect of the stifling atmosphere around, when at last the fire flashed from the Sepulchre. Then a fearful struggle ensued,—many sunk, and were crushed. Ibrahim had assumed his station in one of the galleries; but now he took upon himself to quiet the people, and descended with only a few guards. He had forced his way into the midst of that dense multitude, when unhappily he fainted away. His guards shrieked out; and a body of soldiers recklessly forced their way onwards to relieve the Pasha, trampling over every obstacle, till in the struggle nearly two hundred persons were killed.

The reputed place of Christ's nativity is a subterranean cave, such as those in which the people of Judea usually lodged their cattle, while they lived with their families at the entrance. The sacred locality is, however, so disguised with altars, lamps, hangings, marbles, and frippery ornaments, that, as usual, the vulgar taste of mankind for gaudy decoration has obliterated that simplicity which our Lord himself preferred. Golden sockets are now shown, where the crosses

of Christ and the two malefactors were planted; and in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre the grave of Adam is pointed out, as well as the place where Abraham meditated the sacrifice of his son.

A church was built by the Empress Helena over the original stable where our Divine Lord was born; and she intended honourably to commemorate the objects of her faith by building innumerable churches and chapels beside them; but unfortunately, in attempting to adorn those sacred places, she swept off every vestige of their identity. No Christian now need desire ever to visit Jerusalem.

“ —— And never shall the sun
Shine on the cedar roofs of Salem more;
Her tale of splendour now is told and done,
Her wine-cup of festivity is spilt,
And all is o'er, her grandeur and her guilt.”

MILMAN.

CHAP. XIV.

"I'm not ashamed to own my Lord,
Or to defend his cause,
Maintain the glory of his cross,
And honour all his laws."

WATTS.

MATT. xxviii.

IT was a saying of Pope Leo X., that
Verse 1. no man may despise another man, nor
let that nature be thought contemptible in any
person which the Maker of all things adopted as
His own ; and here the highest honour is put upon
the human body by the promise and foreshowing
of its future resurrection, when at length mor-
tality shall be immortalised. The disciples on
this occasion were so much dismayed at Christ's
death, that they did not anticipate His restoration ;
and, instead of tracing in their Lord's martyrdom
the fulfilment of all that He had so distinctly fore-
told, they consider His crucifixion as the total
destruction of all their own hopes.

The witnesses of Christ's resurrection saw Him
risen ; but they did not, as in the case of Lazarus,
see him rise. Our Lord lay in the grave about
thirty-six or thirty-eight hours, to prove that He
was truly dead ; and after remaining in the grave

throughout the Jewish sabbath, He rose on the first day of the next week, signifying the end of Jewish ceremonials, and that, having begun as it were a new world, He had entered upon a new work.

On this occasion no mention is made of the Virgin Mary being with the other women; therefore it is probable that St. John, who had taken her to his own home, persuaded her to refrain from returning to weep at the grave. The women mentioned by the other Evangelists, probably followed with the spices some time afterwards. It is evident that Christ had left the Sepulchre before it was opened. An angel, indeed, was sent to roll away the stone; not, however, to let the Lord out, but to let the women in—that huge stone which would have barred their entrance had been no bar to Christ's escape.

Here, in so far as God sees fit that
verses 2—4. man should know, we are told the manner of Christ's resurrection. When our Lord died there was an earthquake, and the same again when He arose. Angels, also, had formerly attended at the birth of Christ; they also ministered to Him in His temptation and in His agony, but forsook Him on the cross while God's countenance was withdrawn; yet now they return to do Him reverence. Though Christ himself could have caused the stone to roll away, yet an angel's

presence intimated the consent of Heaven to His release, and the joy of Heaven at it.

The angel sitting upon the stone when he had rolled it away, bespeaks a secure triumph over all the obstructions of Christ's resurrection ; and the whiteness of his raiment was an emblem not only of purity, but of joy and triumph. That resurrection which was joy to the friends of Christ caused fear and confusion among His enemies ; while the very soldiers, who thought themselves hardened against fear, were struck with terror. Even the keepers who had been posted to guard the dead in his grave, almost died themselves of the panic on finding their vigilance so unexpectedly baffled.

The women were told not to fear.
Verse 5.

They were friends to the cause, whom the angel had come to encourage, not to frighten. Those who seek Jesus have nothing to fear. Every believing inquiry after our Lord is observed in heaven ; and if we be ready to make this world our home, let us remember these words, " He is not here, but is risen." As the Persians every morning worship the rising sun, so the Sun of Righteousness, risen from the grave, is the legitimate object of worship to all mankind.

As the two Marys perceived that Christ was not in the grave, and remembered how distinctly He had declared that in three days He would rise

again, they at once became aware that the promised resurrection had taken place; and it is now our sole consolation, in laying the head of a beloved friend in his grave, and in the prospect that our own shall also be laid low, that every tomb shall hereafter become, on the day of the general resurrection, like that of our Lord, untenanted.

Probably the women might willingly have continued to linger beside the sepulchre, but work is immediately appointed them; and thus public usefulness to others must be preferred before the pleasure of prolonging our own secret communion with God. Those who are to rise with Christ in everlasting glory, must rise with Him previously in this world from sin and ignorance to holiness, righteousness, activity, and benevolence. The disciples first are to be informed of the resurrection, that they may be comforted; not the priests first, who would be confounded, for Christ desires more the joy of His friends than the shame of His enemies. Our Lord discovers Himself gradually. The disciples are to hear of their Master before seeing Him; while the women, being sent to tell them of the resurrection, are made, as it were, apostles of the Apostles, — an honour granted them, perhaps, for their constancy at the cross and at the grave, besides being a rebuke to the disciples who deserted Christ. As a woman

was first deceived by an evil angel, so these were first instructed by a good angel to know that they were redeemed from transgression by Christ's death ; and we learn here that death itself is not more certain than our resurrection from the dead.

“ — In his blest life,
I see the path ; and in his death, the price ;
And in his great ascent, the proof supreme
Of immortality.”

Verse 10. The women were desired to go quickly, that they might relieve the disciples from their grief and suspense by this good news. Thus should all Christians carry immediate comfort to those who suffer like themselves ; for life being so short, every hour people suffer unnecessary sorrow is much to the blame of any one who could give them consolation. We read in history of the Roman emperor who not only put several good men to death, but moreover forbid their friends to lament them. Religion, on the contrary, permits, and even enjoins by example, that sacred duty of humanity — to pay a tribute of sorrowful respect to the memory of departed friends ; and how often we can afford comfort to others in their grief, even if we have nothing to bestow, merely by imparting what we feel !

Those disciples now at Jerusalem were afraid

to appear publicly because of the Jews; therefore Christ, always considerate for the weakness of His followers, adjourns their meeting to Galilee.

A strange, but most natural, mixture
Verse 8. of feelings is here described, when the women departed "with fear and great joy;" but while they ran to fulfil God's errand, the joy evidently predominated, until it became a perfect torrent of delight.

These very zealous and excellent
Verses 9, 10. women not only heard the first tidings of Christ, but, as our Lord usually comes most to people in the line of their duty, He now gives them the first sight of Himself. Jesus had only promised to meet them in Galilee; but how frequently our Lord is better than His word, and never worse! He now, therefore, becomes visible to the women, saying, "All hail!" In Greek this means "Rejoice ye!" Thus Christ intends that His people shall be a cheerful people, and His resurrection furnishes abundant cause of joy.

" —— The darkest day,
Live till to-morrow, will have pass'd away."

We do not find that the women said any thing to Christ, but their joy was testified by reverential adoration. Our Lord, who had never before called His disciples brethren, does so now. He was at length the "first-born among many

brethren," even of all who are to be planted in the likeness of His resurrection. Christ's thus acknowledging the disciples as brethren, was not only doing them a great honour, but at the same time setting them an example of humility.

While the women were going to bring ^{Verse 11.} that news to the disciples which would fill their hearts with joy, the same news was carried by the soldiers to the chief priests, which would fill them with shame and apprehension. It was the testimony of our Lord's enemies, that they could not obstruct Christ's rising again; but so obstinate were those unbelieving men, that if they had been raised themselves from the dead, they would probably have refused to acknowledge their own resurrection. The more the sun shines, the more blind are wicked men.

Resolved to stifle all belief in themselves or others, those Jewish priests, much as they loved money, yet to carry on a malicious design against the Gospel of Christ, were prodigal of gold, giving the soldiers as much, perhaps, as they asked, and more than they gave to Judas. Here was "large money" given for propagating what they knew to be a lie; while many grudge a little money for the advancement of that which they know to be truth, even though they have the promise of being remembered in the resurrection of the just.

verse 19. The Jewish priests put such a lie in the soldiers' mouths as carried its own confutation; for if they slept, who could know any thing of the matter, or say whether any one came? It was most improbable that all the sixty should sleep at once, and if one were awake he would alarm the rest. The Roman punishment for sleeping on guard was death; and it is always reckoned a heinous crime in military life, never pardoned by the Romans. On this occasion, every interest would naturally have been used by the priests that some remarkable and exemplary punishment should be inflicted on those guards if they had really betrayed so important a trust by slumbering on duty; but, on the contrary, they received a gift instead of a reprimand.

History records that a general, in ancient times, perambulating around his camp at night, having found the sentinel fast asleep upon the ground, thrust him through the body with his own sword, and nailed him to the place where he lay, using these words, "I found him dead, and I left him so."

Nothing could be more improbable than that a company of poor, weak, dispirited men should expose themselves to imminent danger merely for the sake of stealing a dead body,—and why was not search made in those houses where the Apostles lodged? It would have been a most hopeless

enterprise of the disciples to steal the body, even during the night. At that period it was full moon, and in those Eastern countries the night is almost as bright as the day. Moreover, Jerusalem being at this time so crowded, vast multitudes, unable to procure accommodation, were no doubt wandering or sleeping in the fields, and in other adjacent places; therefore, even if the Apostles had secured our Lord's body, how could it have been carried off without detection?

How awful to think of all the crimes
Verse 15. that have been committed for money! Though these Roman soldiers had so recently witnessed the greatest miracle ever exhibited, which at once proved Christ's mission divine, yet they were now ready to sell the truth and to belie our Lord. It is very grievous that when truth is the great object of life, to ascertain which all the greatest and best of men have willingly spent their lives, the wicked should have no scruple in poisoning it at the very source, and the most undeniable evidence will not convince unwilling men without the concurring operation of God's own Spirit.

The Jews, anxious to be deceived, not only propagated the story of their own invention then, but repeat it to this day; for when a lie is once in circulation, who can tell how far it may spread, or how long it shall last! The priests having so

lately experienced how easy it was to manage the Roman governor, felt confident of doing so now, and the great Sanhedrim sent a solemn declaration to Rome, which is mentioned by Justin Martyr, narrating the circumstances as they wished these events to be viewed, and exciting all Jews on the subject.

In modern times, the Greek Church has a very solemn service on Easter-Sunday, to commemorate our Lord's resurrection. When the allied sovereigns were at Paris, the Emperor Alexander, not being able, of course, to attend as usual for this purpose in his own cathedral, assembled the whole Russian army in the Place Louis XV., where service was performed by seven Russian priests. The emperor and his 80,000 soldiers all knelt together, while innumerable spectators, including the French army, though ignorant in a great measure of the occasion for this august ceremony, were nevertheless deeply affected, and many shed tears.

"The Lord is risen indeed!
Then justice asks no more:
Mercy and Truth are now agreed,
Who stood opposed before!"

St. Matthew, passing over several
Verse 16. other appearances of Christ, recorded by
Luke and John, hastens to that which was of all

others the most solemn, as being promised and appointed repeatedly before our Lord's death, and after His resurrection. Though it occasioned the disciples a long journey to see Jesus in Galilee, when they had already seen Him in Jerusalem, and must so very soon return to Jerusalem again before His ascension, yet they had now learned the difficult duty of implicit, unquestioning obedience.

The Apostles, though they had conversed with Christ in private, must now meet their Lord in solemn assembly, on the same mountain, probably, where He was transfigured.

Some persons professing to believe well, have lived ill; but from henceforth the disciples gave every possible evidence of their sincerity, while suffering persecution, ridicule, scourging, and death itself, rather than deny that they had seen Jesus. The Apostles gained neither wealth, honour, nor pleasure, by proclaiming the news of our Lord's resurrection, but they suffered unparalleled dangers, toils, and privations, merely to declare that Christ is risen. They never relaxed in that glorious work, looking for the reward of their faith hereafter. There are indeed three worlds for the Christian to consider and to preach—earth for labour, heaven for joy, and hell for suffering.

It is to the honour of Christianity that
Verse 17. the Apostle Thomas, and some of the
five hundred brethren, doubted before they be-
lieved, for no conclusions are so sure as those
arrived at after first doubting. Such men can-
not be called credulous or willing to be imposed
upon. The greater difficulty they testified, the
greater cause have we to believe; and so candid
an acknowledgment, that "some doubted" would
only have been made by one conscious that all he
said was perfectly certain. Jesus did not reject
those that doubted, but gave them such con-
vincing proofs of His resurrection as turned the
wavering scale, and made faith triumphant, till
they became convinced that their own death is not
more certain than their own resurrection, after
their Saviour's.

A striking testimony was given to the truth of
religion by Charles II., who, though a most im-
moral man, was not a disbeliever, when he heard
the Duke of Buckingham speaking profanely
before him. The king instantly administered the
following timely reproof, saying, "My Lord! I
am a great deal older than your Grace, and have
heard more arguments for atheism, but have since
lived long enough to see that there is nothing
in them, as I hope your Grace will!"

Christ did not merely leave His disciples a book
of laws, but He spoke familiarly to them, as one

friend speaks to another, delivering to His Apostles the great charter of His kingdom in this world, and sending them out with credentials, as His ambassadors. Thus our compassionate Redeemer brought up from the tomb with Him that tenderness and goodness to man which laid Him there ; and we perceive a beautiful instance of condescension to Peter's feelings after that Apostle's lamentable fall, that Jesus, burying his offence in oblivion, and adverting only to his attachment, particularly named Peter, as Mark records, in His final message to the disciples. This disciple is remarkable for both his graces and his failings, the latter of which may well check the extravagant excess of Rome's veneration for him. That Church, however, prefers to imitate Peter in his errors. Like that Apostle when he said to Christ, "spare thyself," instead of taking up the real cross of inward holiness and heartfelt repentance, they substitute painted, carved, and gilded crosses. Also, as when Peter said, "it is good to be here!" so they see not the true glory of Christ, but the false glory of this Popish monarchy on the seven hills ; and again they resemble Peter in their unwarrantable striking with the sword, though it is not the enemies of Christ that they smite, but His friends. It is better indeed to be the persecuted than the

persecutor, for as the old saying is, “ better to be bit by an adder, than to be an adder.”

All things having been accomplished to prepare for the establishment of Christ’s kingdom on earth, His ministry, His death, and His resurrection, our Lord now sends His commission to convert all nations, thus cancelling the peculiar privileges of the Jews. Only those who can from the heart answer, as Peter did, “ Lord, thou knowest that I love thee,” shall receive or can obey affectionately Christ’s injunction, “ feed my sheep.” The Apostles, when first sent out, were forbidden to go into the way of the Gentiles, but now, none are to be excluded, except those who by their own impenitence exclude themselves. The disciples did not go as Jonah against Nineveh, but on an enterprise of mercy at the hazard and sacrifice of their lives, to conciliate a hostile world ; an achievement compared to which the deeds of heroes are nothing.

All converts were to be baptized into Verse 19. the name of the Holy Trinity, but we hear nothing here or elsewhere of any appeal to the Virgin Mary, or to any Saints. In modern times many pilgrims to Jerusalem are bathed in the waters of the Jordan, wearing a loose dress, which, after being thoroughly saturated, is carefully wrapped up and preserved as a burial dress, that shall ensure salvation in the realms of death.

In the Christian baptism as well as in the Christian blessing, the Father, Son, and Spirit are considered one, and their name one, to whom we must resign ourselves implicitly, that we may be governed by God's will, and made happy by His favour. To conceive in some degree how there may be three distinct persons, yet only one, let us consider as an illustration our own complicated nature, in which the soul has three parts, all separate, yet indissolubly united: the understanding, which we call the head; the affections, which we call the heart; and the will, distinct from both, and acting often independently of either.

Our admission into the visible Church is in order to something farther. Men would all willingly go to Heaven for nothing, but no one can attain the end without using the means. The mere name of a Christian will not avail, nor the mere gilding our actions and giving them a little external varnish, without the heart and character being purified. How truly, yet how strongly, was this opinion expressed by that learned expositor of Scripture, and eminent clergyman, who said, when dying, "I am about to appear before God, not as a Doctor of Divinity, but as a man!"

When Alexander the Great discovered a recruit in his army who bore the same name as himself,

he exhorted him never to forget that he was an Alexander, and to live worthy of such an honour. Thus should every disciple remember continually that he bears the name of a Christian, and the responsibility it imposes, that he is thus enlisted to be a soldier of Christ, who must be trained for the service, observing all that our Lord has commanded, moral duties as well as instituted ordinances, and neither diminishing from, nor adding to them. The great promise that Christ shall be with His people unto the end of the world is ushered in by saying, "Behold," thus calling especial attention to its importance. Our Saviour says, "I am with you alway." He does not say, I shall be, but "I am." To God, past, present, and future are one; and though Christ's bodily presence was now to be withdrawn, His Spirit was to remain with all Christian disciples and ministers throughout their important mission. When Christ told the disciples how much they had to endure, He seemed, as it were, to deliver them the bitter cup in one hand, while He reached them a cordial in the other. Jesus promised that as an ascended King he would fulfil what as a Prophet he had foretold, that by suffering and death they should both complete and conclude all their trials in a cause intended to teach suffering, to be carried on by suffering, and at last to conquer by a suffering Saviour.

The Apostles were not only to go as sheep among wolves, but were to convert the wolves into sheep ; a service of danger as well as of difficulty, when so many, whose interests or doctrines stood in the way of truth, would wear a disguise, while Christians were to have no armour but prudence and innocence.

Without special Divine aid, the disciples might as well have attempted to take up the waters of the ocean in a pen, as to undeceive the whole world from those wretched impostures with which it had so long been inundated. The Apostles could not, by their own unassisted efforts, have unhinged the national constitutions in religion, and turned the stream of the whole world. By the blessing of God, however, they succeeded in establishing doctrines directly contrary to the genius of the age, in exploding the Paganism by which many had so long been miserably bewitched, in describing a character so perfect that not one fault has ever been found in it, and in persuading men to worship a crucified Saviour, especially at Jerusalem, where their preaching was to begin. Thus it more abundantly attested Christianity, that the facts were published first on the very spot where they happened, and that as early as fifty days after Christ's resurrection, on the day of Pentecost, three thousand Jews were converted, and in three hundred years a belief of Christ's

resurrection had spread over the whole Roman empire.

How gracious it was of our Lord to ordain that His message of mercy should be first delivered to those who had been His murderers, thus intimating that the greatest sinners are not excluded from pardon. All the Prophets and Apostles were born Jews, and even our Lord himself was of that ancient lineage, to whom so much favour is here shown.

The Apostles did not put themselves in morose or captious opposition to persons or things that did not actually stand in the way of Christianity ; for, as St. Paul says, they became "all things to all men," not to gain popular celebrity, but to gain converts. They did not trust to a fine voice or gesture, nor to an eccentric or an ornamental style of eloquence, but to the overpowering energy and evidence of the most unspeakably important truths. With uncompromising firmness they attacked whatever interfered with true religion, and they were the first, as well as the last, ever to speak so much sense and reason extempore. The Apostles never rejected any actual truth, whether spoken by Jew or Pagan: they would have esteemed a pearl though coming from a dung-hill, and St. Paul — quotes the heathen poets. It is interesting in the works of Sir Walter Raleigh, to find his conviction expressed that

Homer was well acquainted with the writings of Moses.

By degrees all miracles have ceased in the Church. He who conferred on His ministers the power of performing them, knew exactly when the ordinary evidence on which we credit things not seen became strong enough, and so amply sufficient that men in every land were bound to believe. The disciples themselves died, but their writings shall survive till this world's last hour, carrying with them a divine vitality by which they are preserved, and by which they shall produce powerful effects till the end of time — as long as God governs the world, which will be as long as there is a world to govern.

“ 'Tis finish'd ! — But what mortal dare
In that triumph hope to share ?
Saviour ! to thy cross I flee ;
Say 'Tis finished ! — and for me !”

When the end of the world is come, there will be no further need of ministers ; but, till then, they shall continue ; and what was said to the Apostles may be an encouragement to all faithful clergymen, that Christ will never leave nor forsake them. Infallibility was the actual privilege of the Apostles, but in all their successors on the Papal chair an arrogant pretence, which has led to strange opinions wandering about the world, to

the disgrace of reason and the unanswerable reproach of a distorted intellect. Pope John XII. was only twelve years old when he became Pope, with the supposititious attribute of infallibility; and a child of five years old was once elected Archbishop of Rheims. But the Roman Catholic religion is so much more addressed to the eye than to the intellect, that the youngest might be fitted to take a lead in it; and, as Bishop Hall remarks, "the creed of Pope Pius IV. was filled with fooleries, at which the very boys might laugh." One of the favourite Popish saints, St. Petroc, sailed to Padstow upon an altar; St. Piranus floated over from Ireland to Cornwall upon a mill-stone; and such is the reverence paid to St. Thomas à Becket, that offerings were made at his shrine in Canterbury cathedral to the value of 600*l.*, in the same year that on the altar of Christ the sum presented was only 2*l.* 8*s.* Even when the Papists do intend to give our Lord the supremacy due to His divine majesty, they do so by mere external observances. Gardiner, bishop of Winchester, told the Protector Somerset that pictures and images were as serviceable as books, and that there was no more harm in their hanging within a church, than in the knights of the garter wearing the George. "But," adds Foxe, "what knight kneels or prays to that George hanging about his neck?"

Christians are to keep up their communion with Christ, and their expectation of Him; for our Lord says, at the end of St. Matthew's Gospel, "I am with you always;" and in concluding the New Testament he says, "Surely, I come quickly." Christ's servants, therefore, are to shine as lights in the world. Yet, as the lantern shines only by means of the light within, so all their lustre is derived from Jesus; and to sin against our Saviour's mercy is to sin against our last remedy. As no man would offend a witness who was to appear on his trial, how much less should he venture to offend his advocate, who alone can stand between him and an all-powerful Judge, whose condemnation he has incurred.

" How calmly, slowly didst thou rise
Into thy native skies,
Thy human form dissolved on high
In its own radiancy."

Thus our Lord parted with mankind, not in anger, but in love. It is the privilege of Christians to be strangers on earth, and when they forget for a moment that the business of life is to follow Christ, they descend below their real dignity, by being engrossed with anything in this place of their exile. It is strange to consider how the news of some small outward advantage raises our vain hearts to ecstasy, and yet the news of an

eternal kingdom prepared for us affects not our hearts. How sadly such an evidence is against us!

No man ever had a lease of happiness for life; though many can live now in a fool's paradise of hopes connected with worldly objects, never perhaps to be attained; and yet, while taking it for granted that they have a sure prospect of the glory to come, they can pass days without one hour spent in rejoicing anticipations of the felicity they expect. The same eye cannot at the same time look up to heaven and down to earth; and when we consider how much of our life is frittered away in hoping for things we have not, while they who have most of what others desire are still hoping for something more, which when obtained falls short of some further object to be pursued, surely it is desirable to rest our hopes on one object that never can disappoint nor deceive.

Truly, there is nothing worth living for but to advance God's work in our own minds and the minds of others; and the firmest thing, in this changeable world, is a believing soul which seeks not for ease and comfort, but for usefulness; caring less that our prayers and actions be seen on earth, than to be recorded in heaven. How precious should every hour become, when each may be our last! A man is to be judged, not by his power, but by his will to do wrong; for whatever a sinner has the heart to wish, he

would if possible effect. As an old divine says, "he is as much a serpent who only hisses, as if he stung."

"Oh! who shall stand and live?
When all that hath been is no more;
When for the round earth hung in air,
With all its constellations fair
In the sky's azure canopy;
When for the breathing Earth and sparkling Sea
Is but a fiery deluge without shore,
Heaving along the abyss profound and dark,
A fiery deluge, and without an ark."

It is indeed an awful and terrible scene, which every living individual must unavoidably meet on the day of judgment. In the final letter of that pious author, Jane Taylor, written the day before her death, are these interesting expressions: "I fear I cannot finish — Oh! my dear friends, if you knew what thoughts I have now, you would see, as I do, that the whole business of life is preparation for death. Let it be so with you. If I have ever written or spoken anything you deem good advice, be assured I would, if I could, repeat it now with tenfold force. Think of this when I am gone."

There is much dignity in taking life with composure. As fury and bluster are contemptible in an angry man, excitement and vehement emotions of joy and grief are evidences of weakness, not of

strength in the character ; and it is singular that excessive joy is expressed by tears, and excessive laughter usually ends with a sigh. Happiness, like health, is more felt than expressed ; and the gentle gale, rather than the hurricane, carries a vessel safely through the voyage. Even in the governing of a household, a calm energy of disposition obtains more authority, as well as respect, than all the bluster and bustle of loud and vulgar assumption.

The Cornwall miners yet celebrate with respectful gratitude the memory of Piranus, their first Christian benefactor, who established a church among them towards the close of the third century. With dignified calmness, on his death-bed he advised and exhorted his converts, and then, having commanded his grave to be dug, he descended with a resolute step into it, and kneeling down there, with clasped hands and uplifted eyes, surrendered his soul to God.

This word "Amen" is not a cypher, Verse 20. intended merely, like "Finis," to end the book; but it confirms the words of our Lord, whose promises are "Yea and Amen." We, by adding an Amen after Christ's assurances, turn them into prayers that our divine Saviour may, by remaining with us to the end, make us believers in His name and heirs of His glory, — fit for life, fit for death, and fit for eternity. Then, and only

then, can we look with comfort to Christ's second promise, "I come quickly."

The impenitent sinner commits upon his own soul a more cruel murder than the suicide on his own body. Who would not fear and tremble to frustrate, by his own obstinate guilt, that important design for which the Son of God suffered and died? The best Christian can but copy the Divine pattern, as a child copies the perfect writing laid before him, which requires careful attention, as well as a constant reference to the pattern; but who would willingly, by carelessness, relinquish, in so far as relates to himself, all hope from a scheme of mercy projected throughout eternity, in the councils of Heaven, on our behalf, and at length developed, with every circumstance to convince our judgments, to engage our interests, and to command our affections?

Holy Scripture declares that "all flesh is grass." The greatest and best of men is but as the flower of grass, rooted still in the earth, and soon to be indiscriminately cut down — the brighter and gayer to look upon, the more frail and fading. Yet those who are enlisted into the splendid servitude of this world's prosperity, finding pleasure present, and punishment only threatened, are too apt to forget that the pardon of sin is not so easy as its commission.

The Christian, if his mind ever become tossed

to and fro by vanities, should give ballast to his heart, by looking to that durable state, in comparison of which the longest life is a moment, and the happiest a succession of sorrows. Let him not wait for the storm, then, before he repairs his ship, nor have his armour to put on in the heat of the battle, nor be merely planting good habits when he should be reaping the fruits. Like those beautiful birds which came with their song to meet Columbus before he saw that new continent which he was about to discover, will be the bright hopes and pleasing anticipations which shall attend on the true Christian's mind, and, as it were, meet his soul as he enters eternity.

The comparative duration of happiness in this world, or in that which is to come, seems like the difference between the flight of a stone thrown in the air, or of a bird sustained on its wing. The Christian must not, however, be discouraged, if he do not always find perfect peace; as God may, while giving grace enough to save his soul, yet not grant enough to compose and comfort his mind. Every tear we shed springs from the fountain of sin; yet when we advance along the road of life, the sinner studiously spreads a mist before his own eyes, that he may feel secure on the road of danger and death.

After Solomon had taken an inventory of all the best things in this world, and cast them up, he found that the sum total was vanity ; yet any one attempting to persuade a worldly idler to begin without the Divine aid a course of Christian activity, might as well ask a dead man to become alive.

As a deformed person hates what is beautiful, so Satan, having lost all holiness himself, abhors it in another, and assiduously tempts man to join his confederation against the Almighty, by the bait of this world's prosperities. Still the man who knows the comparative worth of temporal and spiritual blessings would no more hesitate between the loss of one or other, than a man would hesitate whether to lose his head or to lose only his hair.

It proves the utter insignificance of mere worldly pleasures, that if we held them by a perpetual tenure, they would become a burden of weariness, and instead of refreshing a man who was tired, they would tire him when refreshed. If the most luxurious of men were obliged to pursue his sports and feasting without intermission, he would find them the greatest annoyance, and would fly to hard labour as a relaxation from the misery of incessant, unintermitting pleasure. A man does not tire of labour so soon or so entirely as of amusement. He gets more and more

interested in the labour that is to obtain his daily bread. The artisan delights in the progress of his work, the old woman sings blithely beside her spinning-wheel, and one of the most beautiful of Handel's compositions is the air he heard a blacksmith whistling at his forge. Every thing wearies that offers no ultimate object; and those persons who have an opportunity of knowing, declare that theatrical reporters for the London newspapers complain grievously of the intolerable tedium they feel when attending nightly at operas or plays, and that those persons consider it a perfect holiday to remain an evening at home. To a satisfied hunger every new morsel is a burden, and to those whose thirst is satiated there can be no pleasure in drinking.

Were each Christian more prosperous than any man ever is, yet all would speedily be terminated, for there is to be no rest on the road of life until we reach the journey's end. To an earnest Christian, as he advances, the trials of life are no more than the wind blowing in his face, which, however unpleasant, makes no delay and leaves no impression; but we must not too impatiently long for what Forster calls "the grand experiment," our last mysterious change into eternity. As an American clergyman replied to Whitfield, who spoke with pleasure of the short time he had left to work upon earth, "We have

nothing to do with death, but our business is to live as long and as well as we can, — to serve our Master as faithfully as possible, until He shall think proper to call us home. We have no choice. We are God's servants, engaged to toil in His cause so long as He pleases. Brother Whitfield, what should we say if I were to send a man into my field to plough, and if at noon I should find him despondingly lounging under a tree, and complaining that the sun was hot, the soil stiff, and the ploughing very hard; that he was overdone with the work appointed him, and impatient to be discharged? Would I not answer that he was a lazy fellow, and that his business was to do the work I had appointed him, until I chose to call him home?"

Those who are perfect masters of science may spend whole days or years without thinking of it. In astronomy, geometry, or music, a man may excel, and yet discontinue for a time the practice; but the Christian must never for a moment of his life forget his high vocation; and if he would increase much in holiness, the surest help is to think often on the death of Jesus Christ. Let us consider frequently at how great a price we are redeemed, remembering, amidst all the enticements of sin, that nothing can be offered us so precious as the ransom given for our souls on the cross. Let us never banish from

our hearts and memories that divine Saviour, who for our sake refused to deliver Himself from suffering and death.

The terror of a coming judgment must alarm the sinner; but like the tempest which overthrows forests or cities because they resist it, so the storm of our Creator's wrath will only prostrate those who have placed themselves as obstacles in the way of His holy Word. Of all the many considerations that should move us to obedience, there is none so strong as the sense of God's mercy to ourselves; and among all the thousand evidences of that, none is like the giving of His Son for our redemption.

If a man think himself wise, it is almost a proof that he is not so; but he who thinks himself happy can scarcely be mistaken. Yet the attempt to attain felicity without a sure foundation of religious principle,— the one plank that never will leave him,— is but pursuing the wind, or shooting without an aim. How affecting was the remark of that world's idol, Theodore Hook, when for the last time he joined one of those gay festive parties which he had so frequently enlivened by his wit, and was surrounded by friends not one of whom ever saw him again! Seeing his own figure reflected in a mirror, he suddenly exclaimed: “I see I look as I am — done up in purse, in mind, and in body too, at last!”

The importance of every action depends on its object; and the impenitent sinner awakens in his last hour to find himself deserted by God, while seeing only horror and darkness and confusion on every side, he is more forlorn than a wandering traveller who has lost his way at midnight, and is surprised by a storm. With gloom all around, he can hear only the thunder, and knows not one step of the way; but the Christian must learn it in good time, that in the hour of extremity he may know it perfectly.

In a zealous conscientious obedience, the Christian must not only pluck from his mind every weed, but also endeavour to plant flowers, and do so not merely diligently but immediately; because in the Christian's calendar there is no to-morrow. When God promises us grace to repent, He does not promise us time; for we are told that "now is the appointed time."

The mind of every human being is haunted through life by the spectre of death; but the Christian, adhering to and glorying in the cross of Christ, shall enter the harbour of rest, not like a shipwrecked mariner clinging to some broken plank, and hardly escaping the angry waves, but like some stately vessel with all her sails expanded, and riding before a prosperous gale.

Too many, however, neglect the soul till the body is given over, and only send for the divine

when the physician has left them. Every morning the Christian should think what he has to do for God, and every night ask himself what he has done. Lord, give us strength to do what Thou dost command, and then command whatsoever pleaseth Thee ! He who has nothing to entitle him to the blessedness of seeing God except a plausible inoffensive smoothness of conduct, a demure countenance, and a formal, habitual attendance upon a few religious duties, without a thorough renovation of the great principle within him, shall indeed hereafter see God, but only as his Judge.

Those who doubt God's mercy, and yet pray, are, as an old divine says, " mere adventurers in religion." But with what a mixture of reverence and holy pleasure does the confirmed Christian approach the throne of grace and open his Bible ! — the book of truth and happiness in which God's mind is opened to man, as soon as the Christian opens his heart to God.

Dr. South remarks, that the greatest earthly philosopher is but the rubbish of an Adam, and the greatest earthly felicity but the rudiments of Paradise: still though the ascent up a mountain be hard and tedious, yet how bright is the prospect and how pure the air to be enjoyed after the labour is over ! Old age is the thing, of all others in this world, which will not be evaded by the frame of

man ; but still his mind may be preserved fresh, vigorous, and cheerful, by the well-considered and long-anticipated hope of a world to come ; and a palsy might as well shake an oak-tree, or a fever dry up a fountain, as either of them shake, dry up, or impair the delight of a good conscience, for it centres in the heart, and grows into the very substance of the soul.

Sir William Jones inscribed these words on the blank leaf of his Bible : “ I have carefully and regularly perused these Holy Scriptures, and I am of opinion that, independently of their Divine origin, they contain more true sublimity, more exquisite beauty, more pure morality, more important history, and finer strains both of poetry and eloquence, than can be collected from all other books, in whatever age or language they may have been written.”

Many have only conscience enough to make them uneasy in sin, but not enough to keep them from it. They would pray to have their sins forgiven, and yet to keep them. But he that is not against his own sin by a vigorous resistance is for it in his affections, unless he is ready to resign all for his God. There was a serious truth contained in that cruel jest of the emperor Julian, when he confiscated the estates of all Christians, telling them it was to make them fitter for the kingdom of heaven.

The Christian must baffle never-ceasing temptations by never-ceasing prayers, and prove that he considers God to be the greatest of Masters, by being himself the most obedient of servants. It is not enough merely to think of our Creator now and then, or by accident, or during the weekly returns of a sermon, by which our ordinary train of thought is interrupted, while the bent and stream of our affections is inalienably set on this world; — nor is it a general, vague contemplation of Christ's character and work as described in holy Scripture that will be influential on our souls for good. Paroxysms of penitence and prayer, like the intermitting heat of a fever, cannot avail; but the steady application of Christ's redemption to ourselves individually gives solid comfort now, as well as the strongest motives to obedience, faith, and holiness.

He who comes to the wedding feast without the wedding garment, not only misses the feast, but is liable to be cast into prison; therefore we must be diligent as well as watchful in our preparations for the great day of account, that we may with comfort "look o'er life's finish'd story."

There have been Christians who could as gladly leave this world as the wise man in his old age would retire from court. And who would not desire on his death-bed to be able to say, like Charles Simeon in his expiring moments, "I lie here

waiting for the issue, without a fear, without a doubt, and without a wish."

Religion abhors a vacuum in time, as much as Nature abhors it in space ; therefore the Christian must seek God to-day, or he may not be able to find Him to-morrow. He must, by fervent prayer and earnest purpose, actively perform as well as devoutly sanctify the duties of religion, without, however, neglecting the business and prospects of life, or trusting for safety to Popish Legends when he has the divinely bestowed privilege of studying Bible Truths.

“ What are thy hopes, Humanity ! — thy fears ?
Poor voyager, upon this flood of years,
Whose tide, unturning, hurries to the sea
Of dark, unsearchable eternity,
The fragile skiffs, in which thy children sail
A day, an hour, a moment with the gale,
Then vanish ; — gone like eagles on the wind,
Or fish in waves, that yield and close behind ?
Thine hopes, — lost anchors buried in the deep,
That rust, through storm and calm, in iron sleep,
Whose cables, loose aloft and fix'd below,
Rot with the sea-weed, floating to and fro.
But when Religion bids her spirit breathe,
And opens bliss above, and woe beneath ;
When God reveals His march through Nature's night,
His steps are beauty, and His presence light,
His voice is life — the dead in conscience start ;
They feel a new creation in the heart.
Ah ! then Humanity, thy hopes, thy fears,
How chang'd, how wond'rous ! On this tide of years,

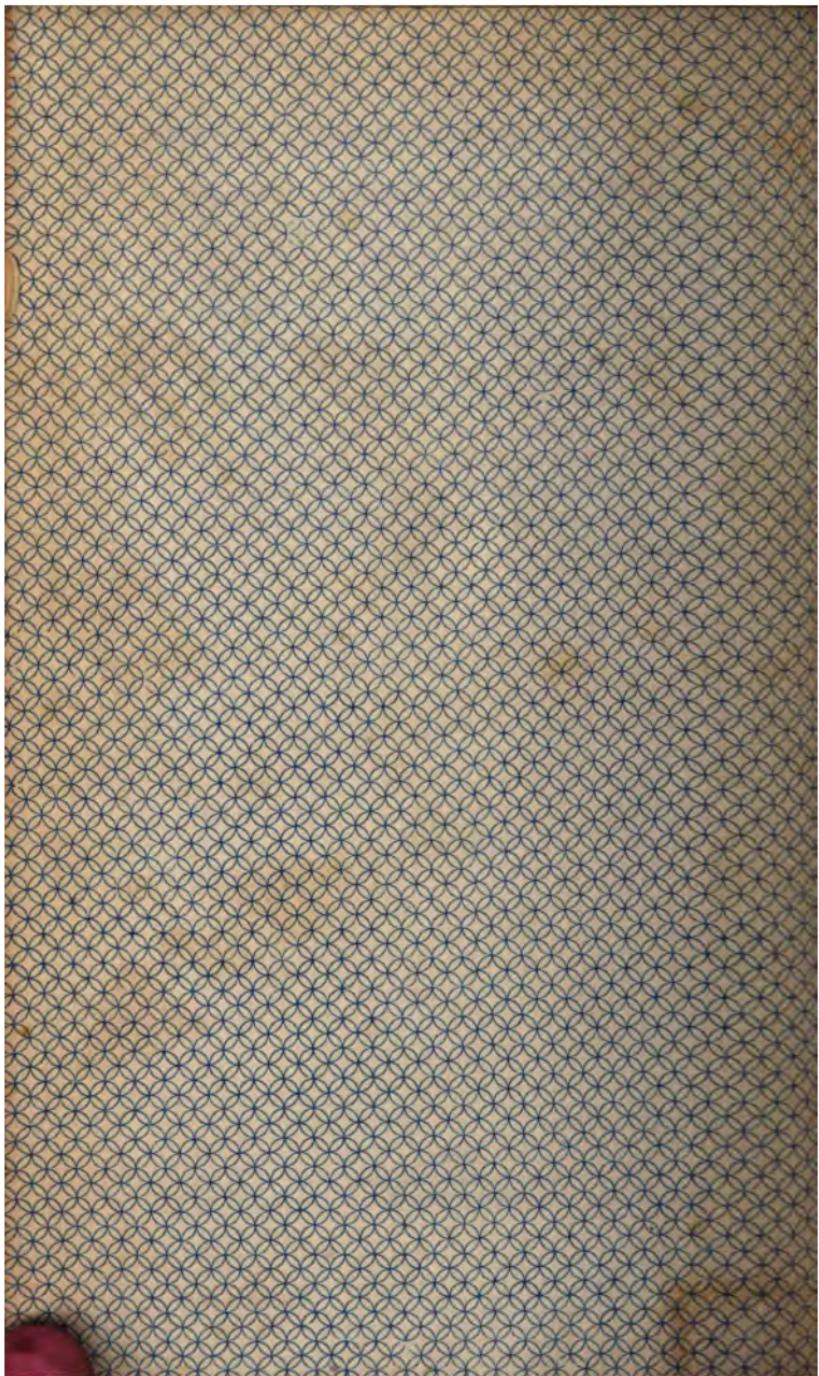
Though the frail barks, in which their offspring sail
Their day, their hour, their moment with the gale,
Must perish — shipwreck only sets them free
With joys unmeasur'd as eternity;
Nor shall their cables fail, their anchors rust,
Who wait the resurrection of the just;
Moor'd on the Rock of Ages, though decay
Moulder the weak terrestrial frame away,
The trumpet sounds — and lo! wherever spread,
Earth, air, and ocean render back their dead,
And souls with bodies, spiritual and divine,
In the new heavens, like stars for ever shine."

J. MONTGOMERY.

THE END

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